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"My son, hear the instruction of thy father."

MORAL ESSAYS

IN PRAISE OF

VIRTUE.

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MORAL ESSAYS

IN PRAISE OF

VIRTUE.

A FATHER'S ADVICE TO HIS SON.

FIRST, my beloved child, worship and adore God, think of him always, in a manner suitable to his greatness, speak of him reverently, magnify his providence, adore his power, frequent his service, and pray to him constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbour, which is all mankind, with such tenderness and affection as you love yourself; think how God loves all mankind, how merciful he is to them, how tender he is of them, how carefully he preserves them; and then strive to love your fellow-creatures as God loves them.

Let truth and sincerity be the only ornaments of your language; and study how to think of all things as they deserve.

Let your dress be sober, clean, and modest. In your meat and drink, observe the rules of christian temperance and sobriety; consider your body, as only the servant of your soul; and only nourish the one so as it may best perform an humble and obedient service ot the other.

Let every day be a day of humility; relieve the wants, and rejoice in the prosperity of your fellow-creatures; compassionate their distress, overlook their unkindness, and forgive their malice.

The time of practising these precepts, my child, will be soon over with you; the world will soon slip through your hands, or rather you will soon slip through it: it seems but the other day when I received these same instructions from my dear father, that I am now leaving with you.

THE HAPPINESS OF CULTIVATING A GOOD TEMPER.

A good temper is one of the principal ingredients of happiness. This, it will be said, is the work of nature, and must be born with us: and so in a good measure, it is: yet it may be acquired by art, and improved by culture. Almost every object that attracts our notice has a bright and a dark side. He that habituates himself to look at the displeasing side, will sour his disposition, and consequently impair his happiness; while he who beholds it on the bright side, insensibly meliorates his temper; and, by this means, improves his own happiness, and the happiness of all about him.

Eliza and Mary are two friends. They are alike in birth, fortune, education, and accomplishments. They were originally alike in temper too; but by different management, are grown the reverse of each other. Eliza has accustomed herself to look only on the dark side of every object. If a new literary work

makes its appearance, with a thousand beauties, and but one or two blemishes, she slightly skims over the passages that would give her pleasure, and dwells upon those only that fill her with dislike. If you show her an excellent portrait, she looks at some part of the drapery that has been neglected, or to a hand or finger which has been left unfinished. Her garden is a very beautiful one, and kept with great neatness and elegance; but if you take a walk with her into it, she talks to you of nothing but blights and storms, of snails and caterpillars, and how impossible it is to keep it from the litter of falling leaves, and worm-casts. If you sit down in her summer house, to enjoy a delightful prospect, she observes to you, that there is too much wood, or too little water; that the day is too sunny, or too gloomy; that it is sultry, or windy: and finishes with a long harangue upon the wretchedness of our climate. When you return with her to the house, in hopes of a little cheerful conversation, she casts a gloom over all, by giving you the history of her own bad health, or of some melancholy accident that has befal*len one* of her children: thus she insensibly

sinks her own spirits, and the spirits of all around her; and at last discovers, she knows not why, that her friends are grave.

Mary is the reverse of all this. By habituating herself to look on the bright side of objects, she preserves a perpetual cheerfulness in herself, which, by a kind of happy contagion, she communicates to all about her. If any misfortune has befallen her, she considers that it might have been worse, and is thankful to Providence for an escape. She rejoices in solitude, as it gives her an opportunity of knowing herself; and in society, because she communicates the happiness she enjoys. She opposes every man's virtues to his failings, and can find out something to cherish and applaud, in the very worst of her acquaintance. She opens every book with a desire to be entertained or instructed; and, therefore, seldom misses what she looks for.—Walk with her, though it be but on a heath or a common, and she will discover numberless beauties unobserved before, in the hills, the dales, the brooms, the brakes, and the variegated flowers of weeds and popies. She enjoys

every change of weather, and of season, as bringing with it some advantages of health or convenience. In conversation, you never hear her repeating her own grievances, or those of her neighbours, or (what is worst of all) their faults and imperfections. If any thing of the latter kind is mentioned in her hearing, she has the address to turn it into entertainment, by changing the most odious railing into a pleasant raillery. Thus Mary, like the bee, gathers honey from every weed; while Eliza, like the spider, sucks poison from the fairest flowers. The consequence is, that of two tempers, once very nearly allied, the one is for ever sour and dissatisfied, the other always pleased and cheerful: the one spreads a universal gloom; the other a continual sunshine.

INGRATITUDE TO OUR SUPREME BENEFACTOR, IS HIGHLY CULPABLE.

ARTABANES was distinguished with peculiar favor by a wise, powerful, and good prince. A magnificent palace, surrounded with a delightful garden, was provided for his residence.

He partook of all the luxuries of his sovereign's table, was invested with extensive authority, and admitted to the honor of a free intercourse with his gracious master. But Artabanes was insensible of the advantages which he enjoyed; his heart glowed not with gratitude and respect; he avoided the society of his benefactor, and abused his bounty. "I detest such a character," said Alexis, with generous indignation!—"It is your own picture which I have drawn," replied Euphronius: "the great Potentate of heaven and earth has placed you in a world, which displays the highest beauty, order, and magnificence, and which abounds with every means of convenience, enjoyment, and happiness. He has furnished you with such powers of body and mind, as give you dominion over the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. He has invited you to hold communion with him, and to exalt your own nature, by the love and imitation of his divine perfections. Yet have your eyes wandered, with brutal gaze, over the fair creation, unconscious of the mighty hand from which it sprung. You have rioted in the profusion of

nature, without suitable emotions of gratitude to the sovereign Dispenser of all good: and you have too often slighted the glorious converse, and forgotten the presence of that omnipotent Being, who fills all space, and exists through all eternity."

ON FILIAL PIETY.

From the creatures of God, let man learn wisdom, and apply to himself the instruction they give. Go to the desert, my son: observe the young stork of the wilderness; let him speak to thy heart. He bears on his wings his aged sire; he lodges him in safety, and supplies him with food.

The piety of a child is sweeter than the incense of Persia offered to the sun; yea more delicious than the odours wafted from a field of Arabian spices, by the western gales.

Be grateful to thy father for he gave thee life; and to thy mother for she sustained thee. Hear the words of their mouth, for they are

spoken for thy good; give ear to their admonition, for it proceeds from love.

Thy father has watched for thy welfare, he has toiled for thy ease: do honor, therefore, to his age, and let not his gray hairs be treated with irreverence. Forget not thy helpless infancy, nor the frowardness of thy youth; and bear with the infirmities of thy aged parents: assist and support them in the decline of life. So shall their hoary heads go down to the grave in peace: and thy own children, in reverence of thy example, shall repay thy piety with filial love.

LOVE BETWEEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

You are the children of one father, provided for by his care; and the breast of one mother gave you milk. Let the bonds of affection, therefore, unite thee with thy brothers and sisters, that peace and happiness may dwell in thy father's house.

And when you are separated in the world, remember the relation that binds you to love

and unity; and prefer not a stranger to thy own blood. If thy brother is in adversity, assist him; if thy sister is in trouble, forsake her not. So shall the fortunes of thy father contribute to the support of his whole race; and his care be continued to you all, in your love to each other.

ON BENEVOLENCE.

When thou considerest thy wants, when thou beholdest thy imperfections, acknowledge his goodness, O son of humanity! who honoured thee with reason; endued thee with speech, and placed thee in society, to receive and confer reciprocal helps and mutual obligations. Thy food, thy clothing, thy convenience of habitation; thy protection from injuries, thy enjoyment of the comforts and the pleasures of life; all these thou owest to the assistance of others, and couldst not enjoy but in the bands of society. It is thy duty, therefore, to be a friend to mankind, as it is thy interest, that man should be friendly to thee.

Rejoice in the happiness and prosperity of thy neighbour. Open not thy ear to slander; the faults and failings of men give pain to a benevolent heart. Desire to do good, and search out occasions for it; in removing the distresses of another, the virtuous mind relieves itself.

Shut not thine ear, against the cries of the poor; nor harden thy heart against the calamities of the innocent. When the fatherless call upon thee, when the widow's heart is sunk, and she implores thy assistance with tears of sorrow; pity their affliction, and extend thy hand to those who have none to help them. When thou seest the naked wanderer of the street, shivering with cold, and destitute of habitation, let bounty open thy heart; let the wings of charity shelter him from death, that thy own soul may live. Whilst the poor man groans on the bed of sickness; whilst the unfortunate languish in the horrors of a dungeon; or the hoary head of age lifts up a feeble eye to thee for pity; how canst thou riot in superfluous enjoyments, regardless of their wants, unfeeling of their woes?

ON THE VICE OF LYING.

To warn us from lying, we should do well to consider the folly, the meaness, and the wickedness of it.

The folly of lying consists in its defeating its own purpose. A habit of lying, is generally detected in the end; and after detection, the liar, instead of deceiving, will not even be believed when he happens to speak the truth. Nay, every single lie is attended with such a variety of circumstances which lead to a detection, that it is often discovered. The use generally made of a lie, is, to cover a fault; but as this end is seldom answered, we only aggravate what we wish to conceal. In point even of prudence, an honest confession would serve us better.

The meanness of lying, arises from the cowardice which it implies. We dare not boldly and nobly speak the truth, but have recourse to low subterfuges; which always show a sordid and disingenuous mind. Hence

it is, that in the fashionable world, the word *liar* is always considered as a term of peculiar reproach.

The wickedness of lying consists in its perverting one of the greatest blessings of God, the use of speech, in making that a mischief to mankind, which was intended for a benefit. Truth is the greatest bond of society. If one man lies, why may not another? And if there is no mutual trust, there is an end of all intercourse.

An equivocation is nearly related to a lie. It is an intention to deceive, under words of a double meaning, or words which, literally speaking, are true; and is equally criminal with the most downright breach of truth. A nod, or sign may convey a lie as effectually as the most deceitful language.

Under the head of lying; may be mentioned a breach of promise. Every engagement, though only of the slightest kind, should be punctually observed: and he who does not think himself bound by such an

obligation, has little pretension to the character of an honest man.

THE DEPENDENCE OF BEINGS UPON EACH OTHER.

ALL things that the beneficent Creator has produced upon our globe, are admirably connected with one another, so as to contribute to their mutual preservation. The earth itself, with its rocks and sands, its ores and its salts, owes its continuance to the elements. The trees, plants, herbs, and all the vegetables, draw their subsistance from the earth; while the animals, in their turn, feed upon the vegetables. The earth gives nourishment to the plant, the plant is food for the insect, the insect for the bird, the bird for wild beasts; and, in rotation, the wild beasts become the prey of the vulture, the vulture of the insect, the insect of the plant, and the plant of the earth. Even man who endeavours to turn all things to his own use becomes himself their prey.

Such is the circle in which all things here

take their course, that all beings were created for one another. Tigers, lynxes, bears, and a number of other animals, provide us with skins and furs to cover us : dogs pursue the hare and the stag to furnish our tables : the terrier drives the rabbit from its deepest recesses into our snares; the horse, the elephant, and the camel, are trained to carry burthens, and the ox to draw the plough; the cow gives us milk; the sheep its wool; the rein-deer make the sledges fly over snow and ice; the hawk serves in some parts of Europe for fowling; and the hen gives us eggs : the cock wakes us early in the morn, and the lark amuses us with its song in the day time; the whistling note of the blackbird is heard from morn to evening, and its delightful warbling is charming to the ear. The sportive lambs, the playful calf, the innocent doves, and the stately plumage of the peacock, give pleasure to the sight; the silk-worm spins its web to clothe us: the bees collect with care the honey we find so useful; even the sea continually throws upon its shore craw-fish, lobsters, oysters, and all other sorts of shell-fish, for our use, and for our wonder. The glow-worm, or great fly of Surinam,

shines in the midst of darkness, to give light to the inhabitants of those countries.

If we observe the different occupations of man, we shall find that they also tend to the same end, which nature purposed. The sailor braves the dangers of the seas and storms, to convey merchandize, which does not belong to him, to its destined place: the ploughman sows and reaps grain, of which he consumes but little himself. Thus, we do not live for ourselves only; for the wise Author of nature has so ordained it, that all beings should be useful to one another.

Let us learn hence our mutual duties. The strong should assist the weak; the well-informed should assist with his advice, those who want it; the learned should instruct the ignorant: indeed we should love our neighbour as ourselves, and thus fulfil the designs of the Creator. The mutual offices men owe to one another, have occasioned them to form themselves into societies. What divided force could not accomplish, is easily executed by united strength. No man could erect a stately building or palace without assistance; one

person alone could not lay the foundation, dig the cellars, make and burn the bricks, raise the walls, put on the roof, furnish the windows with glass, and decorate the apartments; but all this is done with ease when different workmen assist one another.

Even things which appear to us of so little importance, that we scarcely deign to look at them, all contribute to make us happy. The very insects we so much despise are useful to us. May it teach us to value as we ought the goodness of our merciful Father, and to be sensible of our own happiness.

ON GENTLENESS.

I BEGIN with distinguishing true gentleness from passive tameness of spirit, and from unlimited compliance with the manners of others. That passive tameness, which submits without opposition, to every encroachment of the violent and assuming, forms no part of Christian duty: but, on the contrary, is destructive of general happiness and order. That unlimited

complaisance, which, on every occasion, falls in with the opinions and manners of others, is so far from being a virtue, that it is itself a vice, and the parent of many vices. It overthrows all steadiness of principle; and produces that sinful conformity with the world, which taints the whole character. In the present corrupted state of human manners, always to assent and to comply, is the very worst maxim we can adopt. It is impossible to support the purity and dignity of christian morals, without opposing the world on various occasions, even though we should stand alone. That gentleness, therefore, which belongs to virtue, is to be carefully distinguished from the mean spirit of cowards, and the fawning assent of sycophants. It renounces no just right from fear. It gives up no important truth from flattery. It is indeed not only consistant with a firm mind, but it necessarily requires a manly spirit and a fixed principle, in order to give it any real value. Upon this solid ground only, the polish of gentleness can with advantage be laid.

It stands opposed, not to the most determined

regard for virtue and truth, but to harshness and severity, to pride and arrogance, to violence and oppression. It is, properly, that part of the great virtue of charity which makes us unwilling to give pain to any of our brethren. Compassion prompts us to relieve their wants. Forbearance prevents us from retaliating their injuries. Meekness restrains our angry passions; candour, our severe judgments. Gentleness corrects whatever is offensive in our manners; and, by a constant train of human attentions, studies to alleviate the burthen of common misery. Its office, therefore, is extensive. It is not, like some other virtues, called forth only on peculiar emergencies; but it is continually in action, when we are engaged in intercourse with men. It ought to form our address, to regulate our speech, and to diffuse itself over our whole behaviour.

We must not, however, confound this gentle "wisdom which is from above," with that artificial courtesy, that studied smoothness of manners, which is learned in the schools of the world. Such accomplishments, the most frivolous and empty may possess. Too often they

are employed by the artful, as a snare; too often affected by the hard and unfeeling, as a cover to the baseness of their minds. We cannot at the same time, avoid observing the homage, which, even in such instances, the world is constrained to pay to virtue. In order to render society agreeable, it is found necessary to assume somewhat that may at least carry its appearance. Virtue is the universal charm. Even its shadow is courted, when the substance is wanting. The imitation of its form has been reduced into an art; and, in the commerce of life, the first study of all who would either gain the esteem, or win the hearts of others, is to learn the speech, and to adopt the manners, of candour, gentleness, and humanity. But that gentleness which is the characteristic of a good man, has, like every other virtue, its seat in the heart; and let me add, nothing except what flows from the heart, can render, even external manners truly pleasing. For no assumed behaviour can at all times hide the real character. In that unaffected civility, which springs from a gentle mind, there is a charm infinitely more powerful, than

in all the studied manners of the most finished courtier.

True gentleness is founded on a sense of what we owe to Him who made us, and to the common nature, which we all share. It arises from reflection on our own failings and wants; and from just views of the condition, and the duty of man. It is native feeling, heightened and improved by principle. It is the heart which easily relents; which feels for every thing that is humane; and is backward and slow to inflict the least wound. It is affable in its address, and mild in its demeanour: ever ready to oblige, and willing to be obliged by others; breathing habitual kindness toward friends, courtesy to strangers, long-suffering to enemies. It exercises authority with moderation; administers reproof with tenderness; confers favors with ease and modesty. It is unassuming in opinion, and temperate in zeal. It contends not eagerly about trifles; slow to contradict, and still slower to blame; but prompt to allay dissension, and to restore peace. It neither intermeddles unnecessarily with the affairs, nor pries inquisitively into the secrets of

others. It delights above all things to alleviate distress, and if it cannot dry up the falling tear, to soothe at least the grieving heart. Where it has not the power of being useful, it is never burthensome. It seeks to please, rather than to shine and dazzle; and conceals with care that superiority either of talents or of rank, which is oppressive to those who are beneath it. In a word, it is that spirit, and that tenour of manners, which the gospel of Christ enjoins, when it commands us "to bear one another's burthens; to rejoice with those who do rejoice, and to weep with those who weep; to please, every one, his neighbour for his good; to be kind and tender-hearted; to be pitiful and courteous; to support the weak, and to be patient towards all men."

MOTIVES TO THE PRACTICE OF GENTLENESS.

To promote the virtue of gentleness, we ought to view our character with an impartial eye; and to learn, from our own failings, to give that indulgence, which in our turn we

claim. It is pride which fills the world with so much harshness and severity. In the fulness of self-estimation, we forget what we are. We claim attentions to which we are not entitled. We are rigorous to offences, as if we had never offended; unfeeling to distress, as if we knew not what it was to suffer. From those airy regions of pride and folly, let us descend to our proper level. Let us survey the natural equality on which providence has placed man with man, and reflect on the infirmities common to all. If the reflection on natural equality and mutual offences, be insufficient to prompt humanity, let us, at least, remember what we are, in the sight of our Creator. Have we none of that forbearance to give one another, which we all so earnestly intreat from Heaven? Can we look for clemency or gentleness from our judge, when we are backward to show it to our own brethren.

Let us also accustom ourselves, to reflect on the small importance of those things, which are the usual incentives to violence and contention. In the ruffled and angry hour, we

view every appearance through a false medium. The most inconsiderate point of interest, or honor, swells into a momentous object; and the slightest attack seems to threaten immediate ruin. But after passion or pride has subsided, we look around in vain for the mighty mischiefs we dreaded. The fabric which our disturbed imagination had reared, totally disappears. But though the cause of contention has dwindled away, its consequences remain. We have alienated a friend; we have embittered an enemy; we have sown the seeds of future suspicion, malevolence, or disgust. Let us suspend our violence for a moment, when causes of discord occur. Let us anticipate that period of coolness, which of itself, will soon arrive. Let us reflect how little we have any prospect of gaining by fierce contention; but how much of the true happiness of life we are certain of throwing away. Easily, and from the smallest chink, the bitter waters of strife are let forth; but their course cannot be foreseen; and he seldom fails of suffering most, from their poisonous effect, who first allowed them to flow.

COMPORTS OF RELIGION.

THERE are many who have passed the age of youth and beauty; who have resigned the pleasures of that smiling season; who begin to decline into the vale of years, impaired in their health, depressed in their fortunes, stript of their friends, their children, and perhaps still more tender connexions. What resource can this world afford them? It presents a dark and dreary waste, through which there does not issue a single ray of comfort. Every delusive prospect of ambition is now at an end; long experience of mankind, an experience very different from what the open and generous soul of youth had fondly dreamt of, has rendered the heart almost inaccessible to new friendships. The principal sources of activity are taken away, when those for whom we labour are cut off from us: those who animated, and those who sweetened all the toils of life. Where then can the soul find refuge, but in the bosom of religion? There she is admitted to those prospects of providence and futurity, which alone can warm and fill the heart. I

speak here of such as retain the feelings of humanity; whom misfortunes have softened, and perhaps rendered more delicately sensible: not of such as possess that stupid insensibility which some are pleased to dignify with the name of philosophy.

It might, therefore, be expected, that those philosophers, who think they stand in no need themselves of the assistance of religion to support their virtue, and who never feel the want of its consolations, would yet have the humanity to consider the very different situation of the rest of mankind; and not endeavour to deprive them of what habit, at least if they will not allow it to be nature, has made necessary to their morals, and to their happiness. It might be expected, that humanity would prevent them from breaking into the last retreat of the unfortunate, who can no longer be objects of their envy or resentment; and tearing from them, their only remaining comfort. The attempt to ridicule religion may be agreeable to some, by relieving them from restraint upon their pleasures; and may render others very miserable, by making them doubt those truths,

in which they were most deeply interested; but it can convey real good and happiness to no one individual.

THE MISFORTUNES OF MEN MOSTLY CHARGEABLE ON THEMSELVES.

We find man placed in a world, where he has by no means the disposal of the events that happen. Calamities sometimes befal the worthiest and the best, which it is not in their power to prevent, and where nothing is left them, but to acknowledge and to submit to the high hand of heaven. For such visitations of trial, many good and wise reasons can be assigned, which the present subject leads me not to discuss. But though these unavoidable calamities make a part, yet they make not the chief part of the vexations and sorrows, that distress human life. A multitude of evils beset us, for the source of which, we must look to another quarter. No sooner has any thing in the health or in the circumstances of men, gone cross to their wish, than they

begin to talk of the unequal distribution of the good things of this life; they envy the condition of others; they repine at their own lot, and fret against the Ruler of the world.

Full of these sentiments, one man pines under a broken constitution. But let us ask him, whether he can, fairly and honestly, assign no cause for this but the unknown decree of Heaven? Has he duly valued the blessing of health and always observed the rules of virtue and sobriety? Has he been moderate in his life, and temperate in all his pleasures? If now he is only paying the price of his former, perhaps his forgotten indulgences, has he any title to complain, as if he were suffering unjustly? were we to survey the chambers of sickness and distress, we should often find them peopled with the victims of intemperance and sensuality, and with the children of vicious indolence and sloth. Among the thousands who languish there, we should find the proportion of innocent sufferers to be small. We should see faded youth, premature old age, and the prospect of an untimely grave, to be the portion of multitudes who, in one

way or other, have brought those evils on themselves; while yet these martyrs of vice and folly, have the assurance to arraign the hard fate of man, and to "fret against the Lord."

But you, perhaps, complain of hardships of another kind; of the injustice of the world; of the poverty which you suffer, and the discouragements under which you labour; of the crosses and disappointments of which your life has been doomed to be full. Before you give too much scope to your discontent, let me desire you to reflect impartially upon your past train of life. Have not sloth, or pride, or ill-temper, or sinful passions, misled you often from the path of sound and wise conduct? Have you not been wanting to yourselves, in improving those opportuities which Providence offered you, for bettering and advancing your state? If you have chosen to indulge your humour, or your taste, in the gratification of indolence or pleasure, can you complain because others, in preference to you, have obtained those advantages which naturally belong to useful labours, and honourable

pursuits? Have not the consequence of some false steps, into which your passions, or your pleasures, have betrayed you, pursued you through much of your life; tainted, perhaps, your character, involved you in embarrassments, or sunk you into neglect? It is an old saying, that every man is the artificer of his own fortune in the world. It is certain, that the world seldom turns wholly against a man, unless through his own fault. "Religion is," in general "profitable unto all things." Virtue, diligence, and industry, joined with good temper and prudence, have ever been found the surest road to prosperity; and where men fail of attaining it, their want of success is far oftener owing to their having deviated from that road, than to their having encountered insuperable bars in it. Some, by being too artful, forfeit the reputation of probity. Some, by being too open, are accounted to fail in prudence. Others, by being fickle and changeable, are distrusted by all. The case commonly is, that men seek to ascribe their disappointments to any cause, rather than to their own misconduct; and when they can devise no other cause, they lay them

to the charge of Providence. Their folly leads them into vices; their vices into misfortunes; and, in their misfortunes, "they murmur against Providence." They are doubly unjust towards their Creator. In their prosperity, they are apt to ascribe their success to their own diligence, rather than his blessing; and in adversity, they impute their distresses to his Providence, not to their own misbehaviour. Whereas, the truth is the very reverse of this. "Every good, and every perfect gift, cometh from above; and of evil, and misery, man is the author to himself.

When from the condition of individuals, we look abroad to the public state of the world, we meet with more proofs of the truth of this assertion. We see great societies of men torn in pieces, by intestine dissensions, tumults, and civil commotions. We see mighty armies going forth, in formidable array, against each other, to cover the earth with blood, and to fill the air, with the cries of widows and orphans. Sad evils these are, to which this miserable world is exposed. But are these evils, I beseech you, to be impute

to God? Was it he who sent forth slaughtering armies into the field, or who filled the peaceful city with massacres and blood? Are these miseries any other, than the bitter fruit of men's violent and disorderly passions? Are they not clearly to be traced to the ambition and vices of princes, to the quarrels of the great, and to the turbulence of the people? Let us lay them entirely out of the account, in thinking of Providence; and let us think only of the "foolishness of man." Did man controul his passions, and form his conduct according to the dictates of wisdom, humanity, and virtue, the earth would no longer be desolated by cruelty; and human societies would live in order, harmony, and peace. In those scenes of mischief and violence which fill the world, let man behold, with shame, the picture of his vices, his ignorance, and folly. Let him be humbled by the mortifying view of his own perverseness; but let not "his heart fret against the Lord."

ENCE UNDER PROVOCATIONS OUR INTEREST AS WELL AS DUTY.

E wide circle of human society is diversi-
by an endless variety of characters, dis-
ions and passions. Uniformity is, in no
ct, the genius of the world. Every man
rked by some peculiarity which distin-
es him from another: and no where can
ndividuals be found, who are exactly,
in all respects, alike. Where so much
sity obtains, it cannot but happen, that,
e intercourse which men are obliged to
tain, their tempers shall often be ill
ted to that intercourse; shall jar and
ere with each other. Hence, in every
n, the highest as well as the lowest, and
ery condition of life, public, private and
stic, occasions of irritation frequently

We are provoked, sometimes, by the
and levity of those with whom we are
ected; sometimes by their indifference or
ct; by the incivility of a friend, the
htiness of a superior, or the insolent
viour of one in lower station. Hardly
y passes, without somewhat or other
ring, which serves to ruffle the man of

impatient spirit. Of course, such a man lives in a continual storm. He knows not what it is to enjoy a train of good humour. Servants, neighbours, friends, spouse, and children, all, through the unrestrained violence of his temper, become sources of disturbance and vexation to him. In vain is affluence; in vain are health and prosperity. The least trifle is sufficient to discompose his mind, and poison his pleasures. His very amusements are mixed with turbulence and passion.

I would beseech this man to consider, of what small moment the provocations which he receives, or at least imagines himself to receive, are really in themselves; but of what great moment he makes them, by suffering them to deprive him of the possession of himself. I would beseech him, to consider, how many hours of happiness he throws away, which a little more patience would allow him to enjoy; and how much he puts it in the power of the most insignificant persons to render him miserable. "But who can expect," we hear him exclaim, "that one is to possess the insensibility of a stone? How is it possible for human nature to endure so many

repeated provocations? or to bear calmly with such unreasonable behaviour?"—My brother! if thou canst bear with no instance of unreasonable behaviour, withdraw thyself from the world. Thou art no longer fit to live in it. Leave the intercourse of men. Retreat to the mountain, and the desert; or shut thyself up in a cell. For here, in the midst of society, *offences must come*. We might as well expect, when we behold a calm atmosphere, and a clear sky, that no clouds were to rise, and no winds to blow, as that our life was long to proceed, without receiving provocations from human frailty. The careless and the imprudent, the giddy and the fickle, the ungrateful and the interested, every where meet us. They are the briers and thorns, with which the paths of human life are beset. He only, who can hold his course among them with patience and equanimity, he who is prepared to bear what he must expect to happen, is worthy of the name of a man.

If we preserved ourselves composed, but for a moment, we should perceive the insignificancy of most of those provocations which we

magnify so highly. When a few suns more shall have rolled over our heads, the storm will, of itself, have subsided; the cause of our present impatience and disturbance will be utterly forgotten. Can we not then, anticipate this hour of calmness to ourselves; and begin to enjoy the peace which it will certainly bring? If others have behaved improperly, let us leave them to their own folly, without becoming the victim of their caprice, and punishing ourselves on their account.—Patience, in this exercise of it, cannot be too much studied by all who wish their life to flow in a smooth stream. It is the reason of a man, in opposition to the passion of a child; it is the enjoyment of peace, in opposition to uproar and confusion.

OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPRESENCE OF THE DEITY, THE SOURCE OF CONSOLATION TO GOOD MEN.

I was yesterday, about sun-set, walking in the open fields, till the night insensibly fell upon me. I at first amused myself with all

the richness and variety of colours, which appeared in the western parts of heaven. In proportion as they faded away, and went out, several stars and planets appeared one after another, till the whole firmament was in a glow. The blueness of the ether was exceedingly heightened and enlivened, by the season of the year, and the rays of all those luminaries that passed through it. The galaxy appeared in its most beautiful white. To complete the scene, the full moon rose at length, in that clouded majesty, which Milton takes notice of; and opened to the eye, a new picture of nature, which was more finely shaded and disposed among softer lights, than that which the sun had discovered to us.

As I was surveying the moon walking in her brightness, and taking her progress among the constellations, a thought arose in me, which I believe very often perplexes and disturbs men of serious and contemplative natures. David himself fell into it in that reflection; "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is

man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou regardest him?" In the same manner, when I considered that infinite host of stars, or to speak more philosophically, of suns, which were then shining upon me; with those innumerable sets of planets, or worlds, which were moving round their respective suns; when I still enlarged the idea, and supposed another heaven of suns and worlds, rising still above this which we discovered; and these still enlightened by a superior firmament of luminaries, which are planted at so great a distance, that they may appear to the inhabitants of the former, as the stars do to us; in short, while I pursued this thought, I could not but reflect on the little insignificant figure, which I myself bore amidst the immensity of God's works.

Were the sun, which enlightens this part of the creation, with all the host of planetary worlds that move about him, utterly extinguished and annihilated, they would not be missed, more than a grain of sand upon the sea-shore. The space they possess is so ex-

ceedingly little in comparison of the whole, it would scarcely make a blank in the creation. The chasm would be imperceptible to an eye, that could take in the whole compass of nature, and pass from one end of the creation to the other; as it is possible there may be such a sense in ourselves hereafter, or in creatures which are at present more exalted than ourselves. By the help of glasses, we see many stars, which we do not discover with the naked eye, and the finer our telescopes are, the more still are our discoveries. Huygenius carries this thought so far, that he does not think it impossible there may be stars, whose light has not yet travelled down to us, since their first creation. There is no question that the universe has certain bounds set to it; but when we consider that it is the work of infinite Power, prompted by infinite Goodness, with an infinite space to exert itself in, how can our imagination set any bounds to it?

To return, therefore, to my first thought, I could not but look upon myself with secret horror, as a being that was not worth the

smallest regard of one, who had so great a work under his care and superintendency. I was afraid of being overlooked amidst the immensity of nature; and lost among that infinite variety of creatures, which, in all probability, swarm through all these immeasurable regions of matter.

We shall however, utterly extinguish this melancholy thought, of our being overlooked by our Maker, in the multiplicity of his works, and the infinity of those objects among which he seems to be incessantly employed, if we consider, in the first place, that he is omnipresent; and in the second, that he is omniscient.

If we consider him in his omnipresence, his being passes through, actuates, and supports, the whole frame of nature. His creation, and every part of it, is full of him. There is nothing he has made, that is either so distant, so little, or so inconsiderable, which he does not essentially inhabit. In short, to speak of him in the language of the old philosophers, he is a being whose centre

is every where, and his circumference no where.

In the second place, he is omniscient as well as omnipresent. His omniscience, indeed, necessarily and naturally flows from his omnipresence. He cannot but be conscious of every motion that arises in the whole material world, which he thus essentially pervades; and of every thought that is stirring in the intellectual world, to every part of which he is intimately united. Were the soul separated from the body, and with one glance of thought it should start beyond the bounds of the creation; should it, for millions of years, continue its progress through infinite space with the same activity, it would still find itself within the embrace of its Creator, and encompassed by the immensity of the Godhead.

In this consideration of the Almighty's omnipresence and omniscience, every uncomfortable thought vanishes. He cannot but regard every thing that has being, especially such of his creatures who fear they are not

regarded by him. He is privy to all their thoughts, and to that anxiety of heart in particular, which is apt to trouble them on this occasion: for, as it is impossible he should overlook any of his creatures, so we may be confident that he regards, with an eye of mercy, those who endeavour to recommend themselves to his notice; and, in unfeigned humility of heart, think themselves unworthy that he should be mindful of them.

ON GRATITUDE.

THERE is not a more pleasing exercise of the mind, than gratitude. It is accompanied with such inward satisfaction, that the duty is sufficiently rewarded by the performance. It is not like the practice of many other virtues, difficult and painful, but on the contrary, it is attended with so much pleasure, that were there no positive command which enjoined it, nor any recompense laid up for it hereafter, a generous mind would indulge in it, for the natural gratification which it affords.

If gratitude is due from man to man, how much more from man to his Maker?---The supreme Being does not only confer upon us those bounties which proceed more immediately from his hand, but even those benefits which are conveyed to us by others. Every blessing we enjoy, by what means soever it may be derived upon us, is the gift of Him, who is the great Author of good and the Father of mercies.

If gratitude, when exerted towards one another, naturally produces a very pleasing sensation in the mind of a grateful man, it exalts the soul into rapture, when it is employed on this great object of gratitude, on this beneficent Being, who has given us every thing we already possess, and from whom we expect every thing we yet hope for.

ON FORGIVENESS.

THE most plain and natural sentiments of equity, concur with divine authority, to enforce the duty of forgiveness. Let him who

has never in his life done wrong, be allowed the privilege of remaining inexorable. But let such as are conscious of frailties and crimes, consider forgiveness as a debt which they owe to others. Common failings are the strongest lessons of mutual forbearance. Were this virtue unknown among men, order and comfort, peace and repose, would be strangers to human life. Injuries retaliated according to the exorbitant measure which passion prescribes, would excite resentment in return. The injured person would become the injurer; and thus wrongs, retaliations, and fresh injuries, would circulate in endless succession, till the world was rendered a field of blood. Of all the passions which invade the human breast, revenge is the most direful. When allowed to reign with full dominion, it is more than sufficient to poison the few pleasures which remain to man in this present state. How much soever a person may suffer from injustice, he is always in hazard of suffering more from the prosecution of revenge. The violence of an enemy cannot inflict any thing equal to the torments he creates to himself, by means of

the fierce and desperate passions which he allows to rage in his soul.

Those evil spirits who inhabit the regions of misery, are represented as delighting in revenge and cruelty. But all that is great and good in the universe, is on the side of clemency and mercy. The Almighty Ruler of the world, though for ages offended by the unrighteousness, and insulted by the impiety of men, is "long suffering and slow to anger." His Son, when he appeared in our nature, exhibited, both in his life and his death, the most illustrious example of forgiveness which the world ever beheld. If we look in the history of mankind, we shall find that in every age, they who had been respected as worthy, or admired as great, have been distinguished for this virtue. Revenge dwells in little minds. A noble and magnanimous spirit is always superior to it. It suffers not from the injuries of men, those severe shocks which others feel. Collected within itself, it stands unmoved by their impotent assaults; and with generous pity rather than with anger, can look down on their

unworthy conduct. It has been truly said that the greatest man on earth, can no sooner commit an injury, than a good man can make himself greater, by forgiving it.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ORDER IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR TIME.

TIME we ought to consider as a sacred trust committed to us by God; of which we are now the depositaries, and are to render account at the last. That portion of it which he has allotted to us, is intended partly for the concerns of this world, partly for those of the next. Let each of these occupy, in the distribution of our time, that space which properly belongs to it. Let not the hours of amusement interfere with the discharge of our necessary affairs; and let not what we call necessary affairs, encroach upon the time that is due to devotion. To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. If we delay till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day, we overcharge the morrow with a burthen which belongs not

to it. We load the wheels of time, and prevent them from carrying us along smoothly. He who every morning plans the transactions of the day, and follows out that plan, carries on a thread which will guide him through the labyrinth of the most busy life. The orderly arrangement of his time is like a ray of light, which darts itself through all his affairs. But, where no plan is laid, where the disposal of time is given up, merely to the chance of events, all things lie huddled together in one confused mass, which admits neither of distribution nor review.

The first requisite for introducing order into the management of time, is, to be impressed with a just sense of its value. Let us consider well how much depends upon it, and how fast it flies away. The bulk of men are in nothing more capricious and inconsistent, than in their appreciation of time. When they think of it, as the measure of their continuance on earth, they highly prize it, and with the greatest anxiety seek to lengthen it out. But when they view it in separate parcels, they appear to hold it in contempt, and squander

it with inconsiderate profusion. While they complain that life is short, they are often wishing its different periods at an end. Covetous of every other possession, of time only they are prodigal. They allow every idle man to be master of this their property, and make every frivolous occupation welcome that can help them to consume it. Among those who are so careless of time, it is not to be expected that order should be observed in its distribution. But, by this fatal neglect, how many materials of severe and lasting regret are they laying up in store for themselves! The time which they suffer to pass away in the midst of confusion, bitter repentance seeks afterwards in vain to recall. What was omitted to be done at its proper moment, arises to be the torment of some future season. Manhood is disgraced by the consequences of neglected youth. Old age, oppressed by cares that belonged to a former period, labours under a burthen not its own. At the close of life, the dying man beholds with anguish that his days are finishing, when his preparation for eternity is hardly commenced. Such are the effects of a disorderly waste of time, through not

attending to its value. Every thing in the life of such persons is misplaced. Nothing is performed aright, from not being performed in due season.

But he who is orderly in the distribution of his time, takes the proper method of escaping those manifold evils. He is justly said to redeem the time. By proper management he prolongs it. He lives much in little space; more in a few years, than others do in many. He can live to God and his own soul, and at the same time attend to all the lawful interests of the present world. He looks back on the past, and provides for the future. He catches and arrests the hours as they fly. They are marked down for useful purposes, and their memory remains. Whereas those hours flit by the man of confusion, like a shadow. His days and years are either blanks of which he has no remembrance, or they are filled up with such a confused and irregular succession of unfinished transactions, that though he remembers he has been busy, yet he can give no account of the business which has employed him.

THE DIGNITY OF VIRTUE AMIDST CORRUPT EXAMPLES.

THE most excellent and honourable character which can adorn a man and a Christian, is acquired by resisting the torrent of vice, and adhering to the cause of God and virtue against a corrupted multitude. It will be found to hold in general, that all those, who in any of the great lines of life, have distinguished themselves for thinking profoundly, and acting nobly, have despised popular prejudices; and refused a conformity in several things, to the common ways of the world, when those ways were faulty. On no occasion is this more requisite for true honour, than where religion and morality are concerned. In times of prevailing licentiousness, to maintain unblemished virtue, and uncorrupted integrity; to stand firm by what is fair and just, amidst discouragements and opposition; despising groundless censure and reproach; disdaining all compliance with public manners, when they are vicious and unlawful; and never ashamed of the punctual discharge of every duty towards God

and man; this is what shows true greatness of spirit, and will force approbation even from the degenerate multitude themselves. "This is the man," (their conscience will oblige them to acknowledge,) "whom we are unable to bend to mean condescensions. We see it is in vain either to flatter or to threaten him; he rests on a principle within, which we cannot shake. He is incapable of betraying his trust, or deserting his friend, or denying his faith."

It is, accordingly, this steady inflexible virtue, this regard to principle, superior to all custom and opinion, which peculiarly marked the characters of those in any age, who have shone with distinguished lustre; and which has consecrated their memory to all posterity. It was this that obtained to ancient Enoch, the most singular testimony of honour from heaven. He continued to "walk with God," when the world apostatized from him. He pleased God, and was beloved of him; so that living among sinners, he was translated to heaven without seeing death; "Yea, speedily was he taken away,

lest wickedness should have altered his understanding, or deceit beguiled his soul." When Sodom could not furnish ten righteous men to save it, Lot remained unspotted amidst the contagion. He lived like an angel among spirits of darkness; and the destroying flame was not permitted to go forth, till the good man was called away by a heavenly messenger from his devoted city. When "all flesh had corrupted their way upon earth." then lived Noah, a righteous man, and a preacher of righteousness. He stood alone, and was scoffed by the profane crew. But, they by the deluge were swept away; while on him Providence conferred the immortal honour, of being the restorer of a better race, and the father of a new world. Such examples as these, and such honours conferred by God on them who withstood the multitude of evil doers, should often be present to our minds. Let us oppose them to the number of low and corrupt examples, which we behold around us; and when we are in hazard of being swayed by such, let us fortify our virtue by thinking of those who, in former times, shone like stars in the midst of sur

ounding darkness, and are now shining in he kingdom of heaven, as the brightness of he firmament, for ever and ever.

THE MORTIFICATIONS OF VICE GREATER THAN THOSE OF VIRTUE.

THOUGH no condition of human life is free from uneasiness, yet it must be allowed, that the uneasiness belonging to a sinful course, is far greater, than what attends a course of well-doing. If we are weary of the labour of virtue, we may be assured, that the world, whenever we try the exchange, will lay upon us a heavier load. It is the outside, only, of a licentious life, which is gay and smiling. Within, it conceals toil, and trouble, and deadly sorrow. For vice poisons human happiness in the spring, by introducing disorder into the heart. Those passions which it seems to indulge, it only feeds with imperfect gratifications; and thereby strengthens them for preying, in the end, on their unhappy victims.

It is a great mistake to imagine, that the pain of self-denial is confined to virtue. He who follows the world, as much as he who follows Christ, must "take up his cross;" and to him assuredly, it will prove a more oppressive burden. Vice allows all our passions to range uncontrouled; and where each claims to be superior, it is impossible to gratify all. The predominant desire can only be indulged at the expense of its rival. No mortifications which virtue exacts, are more severe than those, which ambition imposes upon the love of ease, pride upon interest, and covetousness upon vanity. Self-denial, therefore, belongs, in common, to vice and virtue; but with this remarkable difference, that the passions which virtue requires us to mortify, it tends to weaken; whereas, those which vice obliges us to deny, it, at the same time strengthens. The one diminishes the pain of self-denial, by moderating the demand of passion; the other increases it, by rendering those demands imperious and violent. What distresses occurring in the calm life of virtue, can be compared to those tortures, which remorse of conscience inflicts on

the wicked; to those severe humiliations, arising from guilt combined with misfortunes, which sink them to the dust; to those violent agitations of shame and disappointment, which sometimes drive them to the most fatal extremities, and make them abhor their very existence? How often, in the midst of those disastrous situations, into which their crimes have brought them, have they execrated the seductions of vice; and, with bitter regret, looked back to the day, on which they first forsook the path of innocence!

ON CONTENTMENT.

CONTENTMENT produces, in some measure, all those effects which philosophers formerly ascribed, to what they called, the philosopher's stone; and if it does not bring riches, it does the same thing, by banishing the desire of them. If it cannot remove the disquietudes arising from a man's mind, body, or fortune, it makes him easy under them. It has indeed a kindly influence on the soul of man, in respect of every being to whom he stands

related. It extinguishes all murmur, repining and ingratitude, towards that Being who has allotted him his part to act in this world. It destroys all inordinate ambition, and every tendency to corruption, with regard to the community in which he is placed. It gives sweetness to his conversation, and a perpetual serenity to all his thoughts.

Among the many methods which might be made use of for acquiring this virtue, I shall mention only the two following. First of all, a man should always consider how much he has more than he wants; and secondly, how much more happy he might be than he really is.

First, a man should always consider how much he has more than he wants. I am wonderfully pleased with the reply which Aristippus made to one, who condoled him upon the loss of a farm; "Why," said he, "I have three farms still, and you have but one; so that I ought rather to be afflicted for you, than you for me." On the contrary, foolish men are more apt to consider what they have

lost, than what they possess; and fix their eyes upon those who are richer than themselves, rather than on those who are under greater difficulties. All the real pleasures and conveniencies of life, lie in a narrow compass; but it is the humour of mankind to be always looking forward; and straining after one who has got the start of them in wealth and honour. For this reason, as none can be properly called rich, who have not more than they want, there are few men rich, but among the middle sort of people, who keep their wishes within their fortunes, and have more wealth than they know how to enjoy. Persons of a higher rank, live in a kind of splendid poverty: and are perpetually wanting, because instead of acquiescing in the solid pleasures of life, they endeavour to outvie one another in shadows and appearances. Men of sense have at all times beheld, with a great deal of mirth, this silly game that is playing over their heads; and, by contracting their desires, enjoy all that secret satisfaction which others are always in quest of. The truth is, this ridiculous chase after imaginary pleasures, cannot be sufficiently exposed, as it is the

great source of those evils, which generally undo a nation. Let a man's estate be what it may, he is a poor man, if he does not live within it; and naturally sets himself to sale, to any one that can give him his price. When Pittacus, after the death of his brother, who had left him a good estate, was offered a grea sum of money, by the king of Lydia, he thanked him for his kindness; but told him, he had already more by half than he knew what to do with. In short, content is equivalent to wealth, and luxury to poverty; or, to give the thought a more agreeable turn,—"Content is natural wealth," says Socrates; to which I shall add, Luxury is artificial poverty. I shall therefore recommend to the consideration of those who are always aiming at superfluous and imaginary enjoyments, and who will not be at the trouble of contracting their desires, an excellent saying of Bion the Philosopher, namely, "That no man has so much care as he who endeavours after the most happiness."

In the second place, every one ought to reflect how much more unhappy he might be,

than he really is. The former consideration took in all those, who are sufficiently provided with the means to make themselves easy; this regards such as actually lie under some pressure or misfortune. These may receive great alleviation, from such a comparison as the unhappy person may make between himself and others; or between the misfortunes which he suffers, and greater misfortunes which might have befallen him.

I like the story of the honest Dutchman, who, upon breaking his leg by a fall from the main-mast, told the standers-by, it was a great mercy, that it was not his neck. To which, since I am got into quotations, give me leave to add the saying of an old philosopher, who, after having invited some of his friends to dine with him, was ruffled by a person that came into the room, in a passion, and threw down the table that stood before them: "Every one," says he, "has his calamity; and he is a happy man who has no greater than this." We find an instance to the same purpose, in the life of Doctor Hammond, written by Bishop Fell. As this good man was troubled

with a complication of distempers, when he had the gout upon him, he used to thank God, that it was not the stone; and when he had the stone, that he had not both these distempers on him at the same time.

I cannot conclude this essay, without observing, that there was never any system besides that of Christianity, which could effectually produce in the mind of man, the virtue I have been hitherto speaking of. In order to make us contented with our condition, many of the present philosophers tell us, that our discontent only hurts ourselves, without being able to make any alteration in our circumstances; others, that whatever evil befalls us, is derived from fatal necessity, to which superior beings themselves are subject; while others, very gravely, tell the man who is miserable, that it is necessary he should be so, to keep up the harmony of the universe; and that the scheme of Providence, would be troubled and perverted, were he otherwise. These, and the like considerations, rather silence than satisfy a man. They may show him that his discontent is unreasonable, but

they are by no means sufficient to relieve it. They rather give despair than consolation. In a word, a man might reply to one of these comforters, as Augustus did to his friend, who advised him not to grieve for the death of a person whom he loved, because his grief could not fetch him again: "It is for that reason," said the Emperor, "that I grieve."

On the contrary, religion bears a more tender regard to human nature. It prescribes to every miserable man the means of bettering his condition; nay, it shows him, that bearing his afflictions as he ought to do, will naturally end in the removal of them. It makes him easy here, because it can make him happy hereafter.

RANK AND RICHES AFFORD NO GROUND FOR ENVY.

Of all the grounds of envy amongst men, superiority in rank and fortune is the most general. Hence the ill will which the poor often bear to the rich, as engrossing to them-

selves all the comforts of life. Hence, the evil eye, with which persons of inferior stations, scrutinize those who are above them in rank; and if they approach that rank, their envy is generally strongest against such as are just one step higher than themselves. Alas! my friends, all this envious disquietude, which agitates the world, arises from a deceitful figure which imposes on the public view. False colours are hung out: the real state of men, is not what it seems to be. The order of society requires a distinction of ranks to take place; but in point of happiness, all men come much nearer to equality than is commonly imagined; and the circumstances, which form any material difference of happiness among them, are not of that nature which renders them a ground of envy. The poor man posseses not, it is true, some of the conveniencies and pleasures of the rich; but, in return, he is free from many embarrassments to which they are subject. By the simplicity and uniformity of his life, he is delivered from that variety of cares, which perplex those who have great affairs to manage, intricate plans to pursue, and many

enemies, perhaps, to encounter in the pursuit. In the tranquility of his small habitation, and private family, he enjoys a peace which is often unknown to courts. The gratifications of nature, which are always the most satisfactory, are possessed by him to their full extent; and if he be a stranger to the refined pleasures of the wealthy, he is unacquainted also with the desire of them, and by consequence, feels no want. His plain meal satisfies his appetite, with a relish, probably higher than that of the rich man, who sits down to his luxurious banquet. His sleep is more sound; his health more firm; he knows not what spleen, languor, and listlessness are. His accustomed employments or labours are not more oppressive to him, than the labour of attendance on courts and the great, the labours of dress, the fatigue of amusements, frequently are to the rich. In the mean time, all the beauty of the face of nature, all the enjoyments of domestic society, all the gaiety and cheerfulness of an easy mind, are as open to him, as to those of the highest rank. The splendour of retinue, the sound of titles, the appearances of high respect, are indeed,

soothing for a short time, to the great; but, become familiar, they are soon forgotten. Custom effaces their impression. They sink into the rank of those ordinary things, which daily recur, without raising any sensation of joy. Let us cease, therefore, from looking up with discontent and envy to those, whom birth or fortune has placed above us. Let us adjust the balance of happiness fairly. When we think of the enjoyments we want, we should think also of the troubles from which we are free. If we allow their just value to the comforts we possess, we shall find reason to rest satisfied with a very moderate, though not an opulent and splendid condition of fortune. Often, did we know the whole, we should be inclined to pity the state of those whom we now envy.

THE INJUSTICE OF AN UNCHARITABLE SPIRIT.

A SUSPICIOUS, uncharitable spirit is not only inconsistent with all social virtue and happiness, but it is also, in itself, unreasonable and unjust. In order to form sound

opinions concerning characters and actions, two things are especially requisite, information and impartiality. But such as are most forward to decide, unfavourably, are commonly destitute of both. Instead of possessing, or even requiring full information, the grounds on which they proceed, are frequently the most slight and frivolous. A tale, perhaps, which the idle have invented, the inquisitive have listened to, the credulous have propagated; or a real incident, which rumour, in carrying it along, has exaggerated and disguised, supplies them with materials of confident assertion, and decisive judgment. From an action they presently look into the heart, and infer the motive. This supposed motive they conclude to be the ruling principle; and pronounce at once concerning the whole character.

Nothing can be more contrary both to equity and to sound reason, than such precipitate judgments. Any man who attends to what passes within himself, may easily discern what a complicated system, the human character is; and what a variety of circum-

stances must be taken into the account, in order to estimate it truly. No single instance of conduct whatsoever, is sufficient to determine it. As from one worthy action, it were credulity, not charity, to conclude a person to be free from all vice; so from one which is censurable, it is perfectly unjust to infer, that the author of it is without conscience, and without merit. If we knew all the attending circumstances, it might appear in an excusable light; nay, perhaps, under a commendable form. The motives of the actor may have been entirely different from those which we ascribe to him; and where we suppose him impelled by bad design, he may have been prompted by conscience and mistaken principle. Admitting the action to have been in every view criminal, he may have been hurried into it through inadvertency and surprise. He may have sincerely repented, and the virtuous principle may have now regained its full vigour. Perhaps this was the corner of frailty; the quarter on which he lay open to the incursions of temptation; while the other avenues of his heart, were firmly guarded by conscience.

It is therefore evident, that no part of the government of our temper deserves attention more, than to keep our minds pure from uncharitable prejudices, and open to candour and humanity in judging of others. The worst consequences, both to ourselves and to society, follow from the opposite spirit.

THE SEASONS.

Among the great blessings and wonders of the creation, may be classed the regularities of times and seasons. Immediately after the flood, the sacred promise was made to man, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, should continue to the very end of all things. Accordingly, in obedience to that promise, the rotation is constantly presenting us with some useful and agreeable alteration; and all the pleasing novelty of life arises from these natural changes, nor are we less indebted to them for many of its solid comforts. It has been frequently the task of the moralist and poet, to mark in polished periods, the particular charms and conveniences of every change;

and, indeed, such discriminate observations upon natural variety, cannot be undelightful, since the blessing, which every month brings along with it, is a fresh instance of the wisdom and bounty of that Providence, which regulates the glories of the year. We glow as we contemplate; we feel a propensity to adore, whilst we enjoy. In the time of seed sowing, it is the season of confidence; the grain which the husbandman trusts to the bosom of the earth, shall, haply, yield its sevenfold rewards. Spring presents us with a scene of lively expectation. That which was before sown begins now to discover signs of successful vegetation. The labourer observes the change and anticipates the harvest; he watches the progress of nature, and smiles at her influence; while the man of contemplation walks forth with the evening, amidst the fragrance of flowers, and promises of plenty; nor returns to his cottage till darkness closes the scene upon his eye. Then cometh the harvest, when the large wish is satisfied, and the granaries of nature are loaded with the means of life, even to luxury of abundance. The powers of language are unequal to the

description of this happy season. It is the carnival of nature: sun and shade, coolness and quietude, cheerfulness and melody, love and gratitude, unite to render every scene of summer delightful. The division of light and darkness is one of the kindest efforts of Omnipotent Wisdom. Day and night yield us contrary blessings; and at the same time, assist each other by giving fresh lustre to the delights of both. Amidst the glare of day, and bustle of life, how could we sleep? Amidst the gloom of darkness how could we labour?

How wise, how benignant, then, is the proper division! the hours of light are adapted to activity; and those of darkness to rest. Ere the day is passed, exercise and nature prepare us for the pillow; and by the time that the morning returns, we are again able to meet it with a smile. Thus, every season has a charm peculiar to itself; and every moment affords some interesting innovation.

ON CHARITY.

CHARITY is the same with benevolence or love; and is the term uniformly employed, in the New Testament, to denote all the good affections which we ought to bear towards one another. It consists not in speculative ideas of general benevolence, floating in the head, and leaving the heart untouched and cold. Neither is it confined to that indolent good nature, which makes us rest satisfied with being free from inveterate malice, or ill-will to our fellow creatures, without prompting us to be of service to any. True charity is an active principle. It is not properly a single virtue; but a disposition residing in the heart, as a fountain whence all the virtues of benignity, candour, forbearance, generosity, compassion, and liberality, flow, as so many native streams. From good-will to all, it extends its influence, particularly to those with whom we stand in nearest connexion, and who are directly within the sphere of our good offices. From the country or community to which we belong, it descends to the smaller associations of neighbourhood, relations, and friends; and

spreads itself over the whole circle of social and domestic life. I mean not that it imports a promiscuous undistinguished affection, which gives every man equal title to our love. Charity, if we should endeavour to carry it so far, would be rendered an impracticable virtue; and would resolve itself into mere words, without affecting the heart. True charity attempts not to shut our eyes to the distinction between good and bad men; nor to warm our hearts equally to those who befriend, and those who injure us. It reserves our esteem for good men, and complacency for our friends. Towards our enemies, it inspires forgiveness, humanity, and a solicitude for their welfare. It breathes universal candour, and liberality of sentiment. It forms gentleness of temper, and dictates affability of manners. It prompts corresponding sympathies with them who rejoice, and them who weep. It teaches us to slight and despise no man.—Charity is the comforter of the afflicted, the protector of the oppressed, the reconciler of differences, the intercessor for offenders. It is faithfulness in the friend, public spirit in the magistrate, equity and patience in the

judge, moderation in the sovereign, and loyalty in the subject. In parents, it is care and attention; in children, it is reverence and submission. In a word, it is the soul of social life. It is the sun that enlivens and cheers the abodes of men. It is "like the dew of Hermon," says the Psalmist, "and the dew that descendeth on the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more."

THE MAN OF INTEGRITY.

It will not take much time to delineate the character of the man of integrity: as, by its nature, it is a plain one, and easily understood. He is one who, makes it his constant rule to follow the road of duty, according as the word of God, and the voice of his conscience, points it out to him. He is not guided merely by affections which may sometimes give the colour of virtue to a loose unstable character.---The upright man is guided by a fixed principle of mind, which determines him to esteem nothing but what is honourable; and to abhor whatever is base and unworthy, in moral

conduct. Hence we find him ever the same; at all times, the trusty friend, the affectionate relation, the conscientious man of business, the pious worshipper, the public spirited citizen. He assumes no borrowed appearance. He seeks no mask to cover him; for he acts no studied part; but he is indeed what he appears to be, full of truth, candour, and humanity. In all his pursuits, he knows no path but the fair and direct one; and would much rather fail of success, than obtain it by reproachful means. He never shows us a smiling countenance, while he meditates evil against us in his heart. He never praises us amongst our friends; and then joins in traducing us amongst our enemies. We shall never find one part of his character at variance with another. In his manners, he is simple and unaffected; in all his proceedings, open and consistent.

ON THE PROPER STATE OF OUR TEMPER WITH RESPECT TO ONE ANOTHER.

It is evident, in the general, that if we consult either public welfare or private happiness, Christian charity ought to regulate our disposition in mutual intercourse. But as this great principle admits of several diversified appearances, let us consider some of the chief forms under which it ought to show itself in the usual tenor of life.

What first presents itself to be recommended, is a peaceable temper; a disposition averse to giving offence, and desirous of cultivating harmony, and amicable intercourse in society. This supposes yielding and condescending manners, unwillingness to contend with others about trifles, and, in contests that are unavoidable, proper moderation of spirit. Such a temper is the first principle of self-enjoyment. It is the basis of all order and happiness among mankind. The positive and contentious, the rude and quarrelsome, are the bane of society. But they cannot disturb the peace of others, more than they break

their own. The hurricane rages first in their bosom, before it is let forth upon the world. In the tempests which they raise, they are always tost; and frequently it is their lot to perish.

A peaceable temper must be supported by a candid one, or a disposition to view the conduct of others with fairness and impartiality. This stands opposed to a jealous and suspicious temper, which ascribes every action to the worst motive, and throws a black shade over every character. If we would be happy in ourselves, or in our connexions with others, let us guard against this malignant spirit. Let us study that charity "which thinketh no evil;" that temper, which without degenerating into credulity, will dispose us to be just; and which can allow us to observe an error, without imputing it as a crime. Thus we shall be kept free from that continued irritation, which imaginary injuries raise in a suspicious breast; and shall walk among men as our brethren, not as our enemies.

But to be peaceable, and to be candid, is

not all that is required of a good man. He must cultivate a kind, generous, and sympathizing temper, which feels for distress, wherever it is beheld; which enters into the concerns of his friends with ardour; and to all with whom he has intercourse, is gentle, obliging and humane. How amiable appears such a disposition, when contrasted with a malicious or envious temper, which wraps itself up in its own narrow interest, looks with an evil eye on the success of others, and, with an unnatural satisfaction, feeds on their disappointment or miseries! How little does he know of the true happiness of life, who is a stranger to that intercourse of good offices and kind affections, which by a pleasing charm, attaches men to one another, and circulates joy from heart to heart.

We are not to imagine, that a benevolent temper finds no exercise, unless when opportunities offer of performing actions of high generosity, or of extensive utility. These may seldom occur. The condition of the greater part of mankind, in a good measure, *precludes them*. But in the ordinary round of human affairs, many occasions daily pre-

seat themselves of mitigating the vexations which others suffer; of soothing their minds; of aiding their interest; of promoting their cheerfulness or ease. Such occasions may relate to the smaller incidents of life. But let us remember, that of small incidents, the system of human life is chiefly composed. The attentions which respect these, when suggested by real benignity of temper, are often more material to the happiness of those around us, than actions which carry the appearance of greater dignity and splendour. No wise or good man ought to account any rules of behaviour as below his regard, which tend to cement the great brotherhood of mankind in comfortable union.

Particularly amidst that familiar intercourse which belongs to domestic life, all the virtues of temper find an ample range. It is very unfortunate, that within that circle, men too often think themselves at liberty to give unrestrained vent to the caprice of passion and humour. Whereas there, on the contrary, more than any where, it concerns them to attend to the government of their heart; to check

what is violent in their tempers, and to soften what is harsh in their manners. For there the temper is formed. There, the real character displays itself. The forms of the world disguise men when abroad. But within his own family, every man is known to be what he truly is. In all our intercourse then with others, particularly in that which is closest and most intimate, let us cultivate a peaceable, a candid, a gentle and friendly temper. This is the temper to which, by repeated injunctions, our holy religion seeks to form us. This was the temper of Christ. This is the temper of Heaven.

DISRESPECT TO PARENTS, IN NO CASE ALLOWABLE.

LEANDER, the eldest son of Socrates, fell into a violent passion with his mother. Socrates was witness to this shameful misbehaviour, and attempted the correction of it, in the following gentle and rational manner.---"Come hither, son." said he: "have you never heard of men, who were called ungrateful?" *Yes frequently,*" answered the youth.

"And what is ingratitude?" demanded Socrates. "It is to receive a kindness," said Leander, "without making a proper return, when there is a favourable opportunity." Ingratitude is therefore a species of injustice," said Socrates. "I should think so," answered Leander. "If then," pursued Socrates, "ingratitude be injustice, does it not follow, that the degree of it must be proportionate to the magnitude of the favours which have been received?" Leander admitted the inference; and Socrates thus pursued his interrogations. "Can there subsist higher obligations than those which children owe to their parents; from whom life is derived and supported, and by whose good offices it is rendered honourable, useful, and happy?" I acknowledge the truth of what you say," replied Leander; "but who could suffer, without resentment, the ill humours of such a mother as I have?" "What strange thing has she done to you?" said Socrates. "She has a tongue," replied Leander," "that no mortal can bear." "How much more," said Socrates, "has she endured from your wrangling, fretfulness, and incessant cries, in the period of infancy! What anxieties has she suffered from the levities, ca-

capriciousness, and follies, of your childhood and youth? What affliction has she felt, what toil and watching has she sustained, in your illnesses; these, and various other powerful motives to filial duty and gratitude have been recognized by the legislators of our republic. For if any one be disrespectful to his parents, he is not permitted to enjoy any post of trust or honour. It is believed that a sacrifice, offered by an impious hand, can neither be acceptable to Heaven, nor profitable to the state; and that an undutiful son, cannot be capable of performing any great action, or of executing justice with impartiality. Therefore, my son, if you be wise, you will pray to Heaven to pardon the offences committed against your mother. Let no one discover the contempt with which you have treated her; for the world will condemn, and abandon you for such behaviour. And if it be even suspected, that you repay with ingratitude, the good offices of your parents, you will inevitably forego the kindness of others; because no man will suppose, that you have a heart to requite, either his favour or his *friendship.*"

THE PLANETARY AND TERRESTRIAL WORLDS COMPARATIVELY CONSIDERED.

To us, who dwell on its surface, the earth, is by far the most extensive orb that our eyes can any where behold : it is also clothed with verdure, distinguished by trees, and adorned with a variety of beautiful decorations ; whereas, to a spectator, placed on one of the planets, it wears a uniform aspect ; looks all luminous ; and no larger than a spot. To beings who dwell at still greater distances, it entirely disappears. That which we call alternately, the morning and evening star, as in one part of the orbit, she rides foremost in the procession of night, in the other, ushers in and anticipates the dawn, is a planetary world, which, with four others that seem constantly changing their situation in the heavens, are in themselves dark bodies, and shine only by reflection ; have fields, seas, and skies of their own; are furnished with all accommodations for animal subsistence, and are supposed to be the abodes of living and rational beings ; all of which, together with our earthly habitation, are dependent on that grand dispenser

of divine munificence, the sun; receive their light from the distribution of his rays, and derive their comfort from his benign agency.

The sun, which seems to perform its daily stages through the sky, is in this respect, fixed and immoveable; it is the great axle of heaven, about which the globe we inhabit, and other more spacious orbs, wheel their stated courses. The sun, though seemingly so small, is abundantly larger than this whole earth, on which so many lofty mountains rise and such vast oceans roll. A line extending from side to side through the centre of that resplendent orb, would measure more than eight hundred thousand miles; a girdle formed to go round its circumference, would require a length of millions. Were its solid contents to be estimated, the account would overwhelm our understanding, and be almost beyond the power of language to express. Are we startled at these reports of philosophy? Are we ready to cry out in a transport of surprise, "How mighty is the Being who kindled such a prodigious fire; and keeps alive, from age to age,

such an enormous mass of flame! let us attend our philosophic guides, and we shall be brought acquainted with speculations more enlarged and more inflaming.

This sun with all its attendant planets, is but a very little part of the grand machine of the universe; every star, though in appearance, no bigger than the diamond that glitters upon a lady's ring, is really a vast globe, like the sun, in size and in glory; no less spacious, no less luminous, than the radiant source of day. So that every star, is not barely a world, but the centre of a magnificent system; has a retinue of worlds, warmed by its beams, and revolving round its attractive influence, all which are lost to our sight in unmeasurable space. That the stars appear like so many diminutive, and scarcely distinguishable points, is owing to their immense and inconceiveable distance. Immense and inconceivable indeed it is, since a ball, shot from a loaded cannon, and flying with unabated rapidity, must travel, at this impetuous rate, almost seven hundred thousand years, before it could reach the nearest of these twinkling luminaries.

While, beholding this vast expanse, I learn my own extreme meanness, I also discover the abject littleness of all terrestrial things. What is the earth, with all her ostentatious scenes, compared with this astonishing grand furniture of the skies? What, but a dim speck, hardly perceivable in the map of the universe? It is observed by a very judicious writer, that if the sun himself, which enlightens this part of the creation, were extinguished, and all the host of planetary worlds, which move about him, were annihilated, they would not be missed by an eye that can take in the whole compass of nature, any more than a grain of sand upon the sea shore. The bulk of which they consist, and the space which they occupy, are so exceedingly little in comparison of the whole, that their loss would scarcely leave a blank in the immensity of God's works. If then, not our globe only, but this whole system, be so very diminutive, what is a kingdom or a country? What are a few lordships, or the so much admired patrimonies of those who are styled wealthy? When I measure them with my own little pittance, they swell into proud

and bloated dimensions; but when I take the universe for my standard, how scanty is their size, how contemptible is their figure! They shrink into pompous nothing.

SCALE OF BEING.

THOUGH there is a great deal of pleasure in contemplating the material world; by which I mean, that system of bodies, into which nature has so curiously wrought the mass of dead matter, with the several relations that those bodies bear to one another; there is still, methinks, something more wonderful and surprising, in contemplations on the world of life; by which I understand, all those animals with which every part of the universe is furnished. The material world is only the shell of the universe; the world of life are its inhabitants.

If we consider those parts of the material world which lie the nearest to us, and are therefore subject to our observations and inquiries, it is amazing to consider the infinity of animals with which it is stocked. Every

part of matter is peopled; every green leaf swarms with inhabitants. There is scarcely a single humour in the body of a man, or of any other animal, in which our microscope glasses do not discover myriads of living creatures. We find, even in the most solid bodies, as in marble itself, innumerable cells and cavities, which are crowded, with such imperceptible inhabitants, as are too little for the naked eye to discover. On the other hand, if we look into the more bulky parts of nature, we see the seas, lakes, and rivers, teeming with numberless kinds of living creatures. We find every mountain and marsh, wilderness and wood, plentifully stocked with birds and beasts; and every part of matter affording proper necessaries and conveniences, for the livelihood of the multitudes which inhabit it.

A very good argument is drawn from this consideration, for the peopling of every planet; as indeed it seems very probable, from the analogy of reason, that if no part of matter, with which we are acquainted, lies waste and useless, those great bodies, which are at such a distance from us, are not desert and unpeo*pled; but* rather, that they are furnished with

beings adapted to their respective situations.

Existence is a blessing to those beings only which are endowed with perception; and is in a manner thrown away upon dead matter, any further than as it is subservient to beings which are conscious of their existence. Accordingly we find, from the bodies which lie under our observation, that matter is only made as the basis and support of animals; and that there is no more of the one than what is necessary for the existence of the other.

Infinite Goodness is of so communicative a nature, that it seems to delight in conferring existence upon every degree of perceptive being. As this is a speculation, which I have often pursued with great pleasure to myself, I shall enlarge farther upon it, by considering that part of the scale of beings, which comes within our knowledge.

There are some living creatures, which are raised but just above dead matter. To mention only that species of shell-fish, which is formed in the fashion of a cone, that grows to the surface of several rocks; and imme-

diately dies, on being severed from the place where it grew. There are many other creatures but one remove from these, which have no other sense than that of feeling and taste. Others have still an additional one of hearing; others, of smell; and others, of sight. It is wonderful to observe, by what a gradual progress, the world of life advances, through a prodigious variety of species, before a creature is formed, that is complete in all its senses; and even among these, there is such a different degree of perfection, in the sense which one animal enjoys beyond what appears in another, that though the sense of different animals is distinguished by the same common denomination, it seems almost of a different nature. If, after this, we look into the several inward perfections of cunning sagacity, or what we generally call instinct, we find them rising, after the same manner, imperceptibly one above another; and receiving additional improvements, according to the species in which they are implanted. This progress in nature is so very gradual, that the most perfect of an inferior species, comes very near to the most imperfect of that which is immediately above it.

The exuberant and overflowing goodness of the Supreme Being, whose mercy extends to all his works, is plainly seen, as I have before hinted, in his having made so very little matter, at least what falls within our knowledge, that does not swarm with life. Nor is his goodness less seen in the diversity, than the multitude of living creatures. Had he made but one species of animals, none of the rest would have enjoyed the happiness of existence ; he has therefore specified, in his creation, every degree of life, every capacity of being. The whole chasm of nature, from a plant to a man, is filled up with divers kinds of creatures, rising one after another, by such a gentle and easy ascent, that the little transitions and deviations from one species to another, are almost insensible. This intermediate space is so well husbanded and managed, that there is scarcely a degree of perception, which does not appear in some one part of the world of life. Is the goodness, or the wisdom of the Divine Being, more manifested in this his proceeding ?

There is a consequence, besides those I have already mentioned, which seems very naturally

deducible from the foregoing considerations. If the scale of being rises, by such a regular progress, so high as man, we may, by parity of reasoning, suppose, that it still proceeds gradually through those beings which are of a superior nature to him; since there is infinitely greater space and room for different degrees of perfection, between the Supreme Being and man, than between man and the most despicable insect.

In this great system of being, there is no creature so wonderful in its nature, and which so much deserves our public attention, as man; who fills up the middle space between the animal and the intellectual nature, the visible and the invisible world; and who is that link in the chain of beings, which forms the connexion between both. So that he who in one respect, is associated with angels and archangels, and may look upon a being of infinite perfection as his Father, and the highest order of spirits as his brethren, may, in another respect say, to "corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister."

HAPPY EFFECTS OF CONTEMPLATING THE WORKS OF NATURE.

With the Divine works we are in every place surrounded. We can cast our eyes no where, without discovering the hand of Him who formed them, and the grossness of our minds will not allow us to view himself. Let giddy and thoughtless men turn aside a little from the haunts of riot. Let them stand still, and contemplate the wondrous works of God; and make trial of the effect which such contemplation would produce.—It were good for them, that even independently of the Author, they were more acquainted with his works; good for them, that from the societies of loose and dissolute men, they would retreat to the scenes of nature; would oftener dwell among them and enjoy their beauties. This would form them to the relish of uncorrupted, innocent pleasures: and make them feel the value of calm enjoyments, as superior to the noise and turbulence of licentious gaiety. From the harmony of nature, and of nature's works, they should learn to hear sweeter sounds than what arise from "the viol, the tabret, and the pipe."

But these works of nature give occasion to higher, and more serious thoughts, when considered in conjunction with the Creator who made them. Let me call upon you, my friends, to catch some interval of reflection, some serious moment, for looking with thoughtful eye on the world around you. Lift your view to that immense arch of heaven which encompasses you, above. Behold the sun in all his splendour rolling over your head by day; and the moon, by night, in mild and serene majesty; surrounded with that host of stars, which present to your imagination an innumerable multitude of worlds. Listen to the awful voice of thunder. Listen to the roar of the tempest and the ocean. Survey the wonders that fill the earth which you inhabit. Contemplate a steady and powerful Hand, bringing round spring and summer, autumn and winter, in regular course; decorating this earth with innumerable beauties, diversifying it with innumerable inhabitants; pouring forth comforts on all that live; and at the same time, overawing the nations with the violence of the elements, when pleases the Creator to let them forth. After you have viewed yourselves as surrounded

with such a scene of wonders, after you have beheld, on every hand, such an astonishing display of majesty united with wisdom and goodness; are you not seized with solemn and serious awe? Is there not something which whispers within, that to this great Creator, reverence and homage are due by all the rational beings whom he has made? Admitted to be spectators of his works, placed in the midst of so many great and interesting objects, can you believe that you were brought hither for no purpose but to immerse yourselves in gross and brutal, or at best, in trifling pleasures; lost to all sense of the wonders you behold; lost to all reverence of that God who gave you being, and who has erected this amazing fabric of nature, on which many look only with stupid and unmeaning eyes? No: let the scenes which you behold prompt correspondent feelings. Let them awaken you from the degrading intoxication of licentiousness, into nobler emotions. Every object which you view in nature, whether great or small, serves to instruct you. The star and the insect, the fiery meteor and the flower of spring, the verdant field and the lofty mountain,

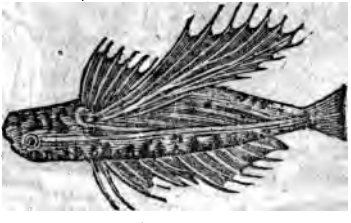
all exhibit a supreme Power, before which you ought to tremble and adore; all preach the doctrine, all inspire the spirit of devotion and reverence. Regarding, then, the work of the Lord, let rising emotions of awe and gratitude call forth from your souls such sentiments as these:---"Lord, wherever I am, and whatever I enjoy, may I never forget thee, as the Author of nature. May I never forget that I am thy creature and thy subject. In this magnificent temple of the universe, where thou hast placed me, may I ever be thy faithful worshipper; and may the reverence and the fear of God, be the first sentiment of my heart!"

TENDERNESS TO MOTHERS.

Mark that parent hen, said a father to his beloved son. With what anxious care does she call together her offspring, and cover them with her expanded wings! The kite is hovering in the air, and disappointed of his prey, may perhaps dart upon the hen herself, and bear her off in his talons.

Mark that parent hen'

Does not this sight suggest to you the t
derness and affection of your mother? I
watchful care protected you in the helpl
period of infancy, when she nourished
with her milk, taught your limbs to move,
your tongue to lisp its unformed accents.
your childhood, she mourned over your li
griefs; rejoiced in your innocent delights;
ministered to you the healing balm in sickne
and instilled into your mind the love of tru
of virtue, and of wisdom. Oh! cherish ev
sentiment of respect for such a mother.
merits your warmest gratitude, esteem,
veneration.



THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH SHOW THE GLORY AND THE WISDOM OF THE CREATOR—THE EARTH HAPPILY ADAPTED TO THE NATURE OF MAN.

THE universe may be considered as the palace in which the Deity resides; and the earth, as one of its apartments. In this, all the meaner races of animated nature mechanically obey him; and stand ready to execute his commands, without hesitation. Man alone is found refractory: he is the only being endued with the power of contradicting these mandates. The Deity was pleased to exert superior power in creating him a superior being; a being endued with a choice of good and evil; and capable, in some measure, of co-operating with his own intentions. Man, therefore, may be considered as a limited creature, endued with powers imitative of those residing in the Deity. He is thrown into a world that stands in need of his help; and he has been granted a power of producing harmony from partial confusion.

If, therefore, we consider the earth as allotted for our habitation, we shall find much

has been given us to enjoy, and much to amend; that we have ample reasons for our gratitude, and many for our industry. In those great outlines of nature, to which art cannot reach, and where our greatest efforts must have been ineffectual, God himself has finished every thing with amazing grandeur and beauty. Our beneficent Father has considered these parts of nature as peculiarly his own; as parts which no creature could have skill or strength to amend: and he has, therefore, made them incapable of alteration, or of more perfect regularity. The heavens and the firmament shew the wisdom and the glory of the workman. Astronomers, who are best skilled in the symmetry of systems can find nothing there that they can alter for the better. God made these perfect, because no subordinate being could correct their defects.

When, therefore, we survey nature on this side, nothing can be more splendid, more correct, or amazing. We there behold a Deity residing in the midst of a universe, infinitely extended every way, animating all, and cheering the vacuity with his presence! We be-

hold an immense and shapeless mass of matter, formed into worlds by his power, and dispersed at intervals, to which even the imagination cannot travel! In this great theatre of his glory, a thousand suns, like our own, animate their respective systems, appearing and vanishing at Divine command. We behold our own bright luminary, fixed in the centre of its system, wheeling its planets in times proportioned to their distances; and at once dispensing, light, heat, and action. The earth also is seen with its twofold motion, producing, by the one, the change of seasons; and, by the other, the grateful vicissitudes of day and night. With what silent magnificence is all this performed! with what seeming ease! The works of art are exerted with interrupted force; and their noisy progress discovers the obstruction they received; but the earth with a silent, steady rotation, successively presents every part of its bosom to the sun; at once imbibing nourishment and light from that parent of vegetation and fertility.

But not only provisions of heat and light are thus supplied! the whole surface of the

earth is covered with a transparent atmosphere, that turns with its motion, and guards it from external injury. The rays of the sun are thus broken into a genial warmth; and, while the surface is assisted, a gentle heat is produced in the bowels of the earth, which contributes to cover it with verdure. Waters also are supplied in healthful abundance, to support life, and assist vegetation. Mountains rise, to diversify the prospect, and give a current to the stream. Seas extend from one continent to the other, replenished with animals that may be turned to human support; and also serving to enrich the earth with a sufficiency of vapour. Breezes fly along the surface of the fields, to promote health and vegetation. The coolness of the evening invites to rest; and the freshness of the morning renews for labour.

Such are the delights of the habitation that has been assigned to man: without any one of these, he must have been wretched; and none of these could his own industry have supplied. But while many of his wants are thus kindly furnished, on the one hand, there are numberless inconveniencies to excite his industry,

on the other. This habitation, though provided with all the conveniences of air, pasturage, and water, is but a desert place, without human cultivation. The lowest animal finds more conveniencies in the wilds of nature, than he who boasts himself their Lord. The whirlwind, the inundation, and all the asperities of the air, are peculiarly terrible to man, who knows their consequences, and, at a distance, dreads their approach. The earth itself, where human art has not pervaded, puts on a frightful, gloomy appearance. The forests are dark and tangled; the meadows are overgrown with rank weeds; and the brooks stray without a determined channel. Nature, that has been kind to every lower order of beings, seems to have been neglectful with regard to him: to the savage uncontriving man, the earth is an abode of desolation, where his shelter is insufficient, and his food precarious.

A world thus furnished with advantages on one side, and inconveniences on the other, is the proper abode of reason, and the fittest to exercise the industry of a free and a thinking creature. These evils, which art can remedy,

and reason guard against, are a proper call for the exertion of his faculties: and they tend more to assimilate him to his Creator. God beholds, with pleasure, that being which he has made, converting the wretchedness of his natural situation into a theatre of triumph; bringing all the headlong tribes of nature into subjection to his will; and producing that order and uniformity upon earth, of which his own heavenly fabric is so bright an example.

THERON AND ASPASIO.

BEAUTY AND UTILITY COMBINED IN THE PRODUCTIONS OF NATURE.

THERON and ASPASIO took a morning walk into the fields; their spirits cheered, and their imaginations lively; gratitude glowing in their hearts, and the whole creation smiling around them.

After sufficient exercise, they seated themselves on a mossy hillock, which offered its couch. The rising sun had visited the spot, to *dry up* the dews and exhale the damps, which

might endanger health; to open the violets, and to expand the primroses, that decked the green. The whole shade of the wood was collected behind them; and a beautiful, extensive, diversified landscape spread itself before them.

Theron, according to his usual manner, made many improving remarks on the prospect, and its furniture. He traced the footsteps of an all-comprehending contrivance, and pointed out the strokes of inimitable skill. He observed the grand exertions of power, and the rich exuberance of goodness, most signally, most charmingly conspicuous throughout the whole. Upon one circumstance he enlarged, with particular satisfaction.

THERON.

See! Aspasio, how all is calculated to administer the highest delight to mankind.—Those trees and hedges, which skirt the extremities of the landscape, stealing away from their present bulk, and lessening, by gentle

diminutions, appear like elegant pictures in miniature. Those which occupy the nearer situations, are a set of noble images, swelling upon the eye, in full proportion, and in a variety of graceful attitudes; both of them ornamenting the several apartments of our common abode, with a mixture of delicacy and grandeur.

The blossoms that array the branches, the flowers that embroider the mead, address and entertain our eyes with every charm of beauty: whereas to other creatures, they are destitute of all those attractions, which result from a combination of the loveliest colours, and the most alluring forms. Yonder streams, that glide, with smooth serenity, along the valleys, glittering to the distant view, like sheets of polished crystal, or soothing the attentive ear, with the softness of aquatic murmurs, are not less exhilirating to the fancy, than refreshing to the soil through which they pass. The huge, enormous mountain; the steep and dizzy precipice; the pendant horrors of the craggy promontory, wild and awful as they are, furnish an agreeable entertainment to the

human mind; and please, even while they amuse; whereas, the beasts take no other notice of those majestic deformities than to avoid the dangers they threaten.

ASPASIO.

How wonderfully do such considerations exalt our idea of the Creator's goodness, his very distinguishing goodness to mankind!—And should they not proportionably endear the Eternal Benefactor to our hearts? His ever bountiful hand has, with profuse liberality, scattered blessings among all the ranks of animated existence. But to us, He exercises a beneficence of a very superior kind. We are treated with peculiar attention. We are admitted to scenes of delight, which none but ourselves are capable of relishing.

THERON.

Another remark, though very obvious, is equally important. The destination of all those external things is no less advantageous, than their formation is beautiful. The bloom,

which engages the eye with its delicate hues, is cherishing the embryo fruit; and forming, within its silken folds, the rudiments of a future repast. Those streams, which shine from afar, like fluid silver, are much more valuable in their productions, and beneficial in their services, than they are beautiful in their appearance. They distribute, as they roll along their winding banks, cleanliness to our houses, and fruitfulness to our lands. They nourish, and at their own expense, a never-failing supply of the finest fish. They visit our Cities, and attend our wharfs, as so many public vehicles, ready to set out at all hours.

Those sheep, which give their udders to be drained by the busy frisking lambs, are fattening their flesh for our support: and while they fill their own fleeces, are providing for our comfortable clothing. Yonder kine, some of which are browsing upon the tender herb, others, satiated with pasturage, and ruminating under the shady covert, though conscious of no such design are preparing, for our use, one of the softest, purest, and most

salutary of liquors. The bees that fly humming about our seat, and pursue their work on the fragrant blossoms, are collecting balm and sweetness, to compose the richest of sirups; which though the produce of their toil, is intended for our good. Nature and her whole family are our obsequious servants, our ever active labourers. They bring the fruits of their united industry and pour them into our lap, or deposit them in our store-rooms.

ASPASIO.

Who can ever sufficiently admire this immense benignity! The Supreme Disposer, of events has commanded delight and profit to walk hand in hand, through his ample creation; making all things so perfectly pleasing, as if beauty was their only end; yet all things so eminently serviceable, as if usefulness had been their whole design. And as a most winning invitation to our gratitude, he has rendered man the centre, in which all the emanations of his beneficence, diffused through this terrestial system, finally terminate.

THE FOLLY AND MISERY OF IDLENESS.

THE idle man lives not to himself, with any more advantage than he lives to the world. It is indeed on a supposition entirely opposite, that persons of this character proceed. They imagine that, how deficient soever they may be in point of duty, they at least consult their own satisfaction. They leave to others the drudgery of life, and betake themselves, as they think, to the quarter of enjoyment and ease. Now, in contradiction to this, I assert, and hope to prove, that the idle man, first shuts the door against all improvement; next, that he opens it wide to every destructive folly; and lastly, that he excludes himself from the true enjoyment of pleasure.

First, he shuts the door against improvement of every kind, whether of mind, body, or fortune. The law of our nature, the condition under which we were placed from our birth, is, that nothing good or great is to be acquired, without toil and industry. A price is appointed by Providence to be paid for every thing; and the price of improvement, is

labour. Industry, may, indeed, be sometimes disappointed. The race may not be always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. But at the same time, it is certain that, in the ordinary course of things, without strength, the battle cannot be gained; without swiftness, the race cannot be run with success. If we consult either the improvement of the mind, or the health of the body, it is well known that exercise is the great instrument of promoting both. Sloth, enfeebles equally the bodily, and the mental powers. As in the animal system, it engenders disease, so on the faculties of the soul it brings a fatal rust, which corrodes and wastes them; which, in a short time, reduces the brightest genius to the same level with the meanest understanding. The great differences which take place among men, are not owing to a distinction that nature has made in their original powers, so much as to the superior diligence with which some have improved these powers beyond others. To no purpose do we possess the seeds of many great abilities, if they are suffered to lie dormant within us. It is not the latent possession, but the active exertion of them, which gives them merit.

Thousands whom indolence has sunk into contemptible obscurity, might have come forward to the highest distinction, if idleness had not frustrated the effect of all their powers.

Instead of going on to improvement, all things go to decline, with the idle man. His character falls into contempt. His fortune is consumed. Disorder, confusion, and embarrassment, mark his whole situation. Observe in what lively colours the state of his affairs is described by Solomon, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And lo! it was all grown over with thorns! nettles had covered the face thereof; and the stone wall was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it, and received instruction." Is it in this manner, that a man lives to himself? Are these the advantages which were expected to be found in the lap of ease? The down may at first have appeared soft; but it will soon be found to cover thorns innumerable. This is, however, only a small part of the evils which persons of this description bring on themselves; for,

In the second place, while in this manner they shut the door against every improvement, they open it wide to the most destructive vices and follies. The human mind cannot remain always unemployed. Its passions must have some exercise. If we supply them not with proper employment, they are sure to run loose into riot and disorder. While we are unoccupied by what is good, evil is continually at hand: and hence it is said in Scripture, that as soon as Satan "found the house empty," he took possession, and filled it "with evil spirits." Every man who recollects his conduct, may be satisfied, that his hours of idleness have always proved the hours most dangerous to virtue. It was then, that criminal desires arose; guilty pursuits were suggested; and designs were formed, which, in their issue, have disquieted and embittered their whole life. If seasons of idleness are dangerous, what must a continued habit of it prove? Habitual indolence, by a silent and secret progress, undermines every virtue in the soul. More violent passions run their course, and terminate. They are like rapid torrents, which foam and swell, and bear down every thing

before them. But after having overflowed their banks, their impetuosity subsides. They return, by degrees into their natural channel; and the damage which they have done, can be repaired. Sloth is like the slowly flowing, putrid stream, which stagnates in the marsh, breeds venomous animals, and poisonous plants; and infects with pestilential vapours, the whole country round it. Having once tainted the soul, it leaves no part of it sound; and, at the same time, gives not those alarms to conscience, which the eruptions of bolder and fiercer emotions often occasion. The disease which it brings on, is creeping and insidious; and is, on that account, more certainly mortal.

One constant effect of idleness, is to nourish the passions, and of course, to heighten our demands for gratification; while it unhappily withdraws from us the proper means of gratifying these demands. If the desires of the industrious man are set upon opulence or distinction, upon the conveniences, or the advantages of life, he can accomplish his *desires*, by methods which are fair and

allowable. The idle man has the same desires with the industrious, but not the same resources for compassing his ends by honourable means. He must therefore, turn himself to seek by fraud, or by violence, what he cannot submit to acquire by industry. Hence the origin of those multiplied crimes to which idleness is daily giving birth in the world; and which contribute so much to violate the order, and to disturb the peace of society. In general, the children of idleness may be ranked under two denominations or classes of men. Either, incapable of any effort, they are such as sink into absolute meanness of character, and contentedly wallow with the drunkard and the debauchee, among the herd of the sensual, until poverty overtakes them, or disease cuts them off: or, they are such as, retaining some remains of vigour, are impelled, by their passions, to venture on a desperate attempt for retrieving their ruined fortunes. In this case, they employ the art of the fraudulent gamester, to ensnare the unwary. They issue forth with the highwayman to plunder on the road; or with the thief and the robber, they infest the City by night. From *this* class, our prisons are peopled; and to

them the scaffold is furnished with those melancholy admonitions, which are so often delivered from it to the crowd. Such are frequently the tragical, but well-known consequences of vice and idleness.

In the third and last place, how dangerous soever idleness may be to virtue, are there not pleasures, it may be said, which attend it? Is there not ground to plead, that it brings a release from the oppressive cares of the world; and soothes the mind with a gentle satisfaction, which is not to be found amidst the toils of a busy active life?—This is an advantage which, least of all others, we admit it to possess. In behalf of incessant labour, no man contends. Occasional release from toil, and indulgence of ease, is what nature demands, and virtue allows. But what we assert is, that nothing is so great an enemy to the lively and spirited enjoyment of life, as a relaxed and indolent habit of mind. He who knows not what it is to labour, knows not what it is to enjoy. The felicity of human life, depends on the regular prosecution of some laudable purpose or object, which keeps awake, and enlivens all our powers. Our *happiness* consists in the pursuit, much more

than in the attainment, of any temporal good Rest is agreeable: but it is only from preceding labours, that rest acquires its true relish. When the mind is suffered to remain in continued inaction, all its powers decay. It soon languishes and sickens; and the pleasures which it proposed to obtain from rest, end in tediousness and insipidity. To this, let that miserable set of men bear witness, who, after spending great part of their life in active industry, have retired to what they fancied was to be a pleasing enjoyment of themselves, in wealthy inactivity, and profound repose. Where they expected to find a paradise, they have found nothing but a dreary and comfortless waste. Their days have dragged on, in uniform languor; with the melancholy remembrance often returning, of the cheerful hours they passed, when they were engaged in the honest business and labours of the world.

We appeal to every one who has the least knowledge or observation of life, whether the busy, or idle, have the most agreeable enjoyment of themselves? Compare them in their families. Compare them in the societies with

which they mingle; and remark, which of them discover most cheerfulness and gaiety, which possess the most regular flow of spirits; whose temper is most equal, whose good humour most unclouded. While the active and diligent both enliven, and enjoy society, the idle are not only a burden to themselves, but a burden to those with whom they are connected; a nuisance to all whom they oppress with their company.

Enough has now been said to convince every thinking person, of the folly, the guilt, and the misery of the idle state. Let these admonitions stir us up to exert ourselves in our different occupations, with that virtuous activity which becomes Men and Christians. Let us arise from the bed of sloth; distribute our time with attention and care; and improve to advantage the opportunities which Providence has bestowed. The material business in which our several stations engage us may often prove not sufficient to occupy the whole of our time and attention. In the life even of busy Men, there are frequent intervals of leisure. Let them take care that into these

none of the vices of idleness creep. Let some secondary, some subsidiary, employment, of a fair and laudable kind, be always at hand to fill up those vacant spaces of life, which too many assign, either to corrupting amusements, or to mere inaction. We ought never to forget, that entire idleness, always borders either on misery, or guilt.

At the same time, let the course of our employments be ordered in such a manner, that in carrying them on, we may be also promoting our eternal interest. With the business of the world, let us properly intermix the exercises of devotion. By religious duties, and virtuous actions, let us study to prepare ourselves for a better world. In the midst of our labours for this life, it ought never to be forgotten, that we must "first seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and give diligence to make our calling and election sure;" otherwise, how active soever we may seem to be, our whole activity will prove only a laborious idleness: we shall appear in the end, to have been busy to no purpose, or to a purpose worse than none. Then only we fulfil

the proper character of Christians, when we join that pious zeal which becomes us as the servants of God, with that industry which is required of us, as good members of society; when, according to the exhortation of the Apostle, "we are found not slothful in business," and, at the same time, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

DIFFIDENCE OF OUR ABILITIES, A MARK OF WISDOM.

It is a sure indication of good sense, to be diffident of it. We then, and not till then, are growing wise, when we begin to discern how weak and unwise we are. An absolute perfection of understanding, is impossible: he makes the nearest approaches to it, who has the sense to discern, and the humility to acknowledge, its imperfections. Modesty always sits gracefully upon youth; it covers a multitude of faults, and doubles the lustre of every virtue which it seems to hide: the perfections of men being like those flowers which appear more beautiful, when their leaves are

a little contracted and folded up, than when they are full blown, and display themselves, without any reserve, to the view.

We are, some of us, very fond of knowledge, and apt to value ourselves upon any proficiency in the sciences; one science, however, there is, worth more than all the rest, and that is the science of living well; which shall remain, when "tongues shall cease," and "knowledge shall vanish away." As to new notions, and new doctrines, of which this age is very fruitful, the time will come, when we shall have no pleasure in them: nay the time will come, when they shall be exploded, and would have been forgotten, if they had not been preserved in those excellent books, which contain a confutation of them; like insects preserved for ages in amber which otherwise would have returned to the common mass of things. But a firm belief of Christianity, and a practice suitable to it, will support and invigorate the mind to the last; and most of all, at last, at that important hour, which must decide our hopes and apprehensions: and the wisdom, which like our Saviour,

cometh from above, will, through his merits, bring us thither. All our other studies and pursuits, however different, ought to be subservient to, and centre in, this grand point, the pursuit of eternal happiness, by being good in ourselves, and useful to the world.

TRUST IN THE CARE OF PROVIDENCE RECOMMENDED.

MAN, considered in himself, is a very helpless, and a very wretched being. He is subject every moment to the greatest calamities and misfortunes. He is beset with dangers on all sides; and may become unhappy by numberless casualties, which he could not foresee, nor have prevented, had he foreseen them.

It is our comfort, while we are exposed to so many accidents, that we are under the care of ONE, who directs all events, and has in his hands, the management of every thing that is capable of annoying or offending us; who knows the assistance we stand in need of, and is always ready to bestow it on those who ask *it of him*.

The natural homage, which such a creature bears to so infinitely wise and good a Being, is a firm reliance on him for the blessings and conveniencies of life; and an habitual trust in him, for deliverance out of all such dangers and difficulties as may befall us.

The man who always lives in this disposition of mind, has not the same dark and melancholy views of human nature, as he who considers himself abstractedly from this relation to the Supreme Being. At the same time that he reflects upon his own weakness and imperfection, he comforts himself with the contemplation of those divine attributes which are employed for his safety, and his welfare. He finds his want of foresight made up, by the omniscience of Him who is his support. He is not sensible of his own want of strength, when he knows that his helper is Almighty. In short, the person who has a firm trust in the Supreme Being, is powerful in his power, wise by his wisdom, happy by his happiness. He reaps the benefit of every divine attribute and loses his own insufficiency in the fulness of infinite perfection.

To make our lives more easy to us, we are commanded to put our trust in him, who is thus able to relieve and succour us; the Divine Goodness having made such a reliance a duty, notwithstanding we should have been, miserable, had it been forbidden us.

Among several motives, which might be made use of to recommend this duty to us, I shall only take notice of those that follow.

The first and strongest is, that we are promised, He will not fail those who put their trust in him.

But without considering the supernatural blessing, which accompanies this duty, we may observe, that it has a natural tendency to its own reward; or, in other words, that this firm trust and confidence in the great Disposer of all things, contributes very much to the getting clear of any affliction, or to the bearing of it manfully. A person who believes he has his succour at hand, and that he acts in the sight of his friend, often exerts himself beyond his abilities; and does

wonders that are not to be matched by one who is not animated with such a confidence of success. Trust in the assistance of an Almighty Being, naturally produces patience, hope, cheerfulness, and all other dispositions of mind, which alleviate those calamities that we are not able to remove.

The practice of this virtue administers great comfort to the mind of man, in times of poverty and affliction; but most of all, in the hour of death. When the soul is hovering in the last moment of its separation; when it is just entering on another state of existence, to converse with scenes, and objects, and companions, that are altogether new; what can support her under such tremblings of thought, such fear, such anxiety, such apprehensions, but the casting of all her cares upon Him, who first gave her being; who has conducted her through one stage of it; and who will be always present, to guide and comfort her in her progress through eternity?

ON CHEERFULNESS.

I HAVE always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient; cheerfulness is fixed and permanent. They are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth, who are subject to the greatest depression of melancholy: on the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind much exquisite gladness, prevents it from falling into any depth of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of day-light in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.

Men of austere principles look upon mirth as too wanton and dissolute for a state of probation, and as filled with a certain triumph and insolence of heart, that are inconsistent with a life, which is every moment obnoxious to the greatest dangers.

Cheerfulness of mind is not liable to any *of these* exceptions. It is of a serious and

composed nature. It does not throw the mind into a condition improper for the present state of humanity; and is very conspicuous in the characters of those, who are looked upon as the greatest philosophers among the heathens, as well as among those, who have been deservedly esteemed as saints and holy men among Christians.

If we consider cheerfulness in three lights, with regard to ourselves, to those whom we converse with, and to the great Author of our being, it will not a little recommend itself on each of these accounts. The man who is possessed of this excellent frame of mind, is not only easy in his thoughts, but a perfect master of all the powers and faculties of the soul; his imagination is always clear, and his judgement undisturbed; his temper is even and unruffled, whether in action or in solitude. He comes with a relish, to all those goods which nature has provided for him; tastes all the pleasures of the creation which are poured about him; and does not feel the ill weight of those accidental evils which may befall him.

If we consider him in relation to the persons with whom he converses, it naturally produces love and good will towards him. A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good humour in those who come within its influence. A man finds himself pleased, he does not know why, with the cheerfulness of his companion: it is like a sudden sunshine that awakens a secret delight in the mind without her attending to it. The heart rejoices of its own accord, and naturally flows out into friendship and benevolence towards the person who has so kindly an effect upon it.

When I consider this cheerful state of mind in its third relation, I cannot but look upon it as a constant habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to providence under all its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the divine will in his conduct towards man.

There are but two things which, in my opinion, can reasonably deprive us of this cheerfulness of heart. The first of these is the sense of guilt. A man who lives in a state of vice and impenitence, can have no title to that evenness and tranquillity of mind which is the health of the soul, and the natural effect of virtue and innocence. Cheerfulness in a bad man deserves a harder name than language can furnish us with, and is many degrees beyond what we commonly call folly or madness.

Atheism, by which I mean a disbelief of a Supreme Being, and consequently of a future state, under whatsoever title it shelters itself, may likewise very reasonably deprive a man of this cheerfulness of temper. There is something so particularly gloomy and offensive to human nature in the prospect of non-existence, that I cannot but wonder, with many excellent writers, how it is possible for a man to outlive the expectation of it. For my own part, I think the being of a God is so little to be doubted, that it is almost the only truth we are sure of, and such a truth as we meet with in every object,

in every occurrence, and in every thought. If we look into the characters of this tribe of infidels, we generally find they are made up of pride, spleen, and cavil. It is indeed no wonder that men, who are uneasy in themselves, should be so to the rest of the world; and how is it possible for a man to be otherwise than uneasy in himself, who is in danger every moment of losing his entire existence and dropping into nothing?

The vicious man and atheist have, therefore no pretence to cheerfulness, and would act very unreasonably, should they endeavour after it. It is impossible for any one to live in good humour, and enjoy his present existence, who is apprehensive either of torment or annihilation; and of being miserable, or of not being at all.

After having mentioned these two great principles, which are destructive of cheerfulness in their own nature, as well as in right reason, I cannot think of any other that ought to banish this happy temper from a virtuous mind. Pain and sickness, shame and reproach, poverty and old age, nay death

itself, considering the shortness of their duration, and the advantage we may reap from them, do not deserve the name of evils. A good mind may bear up under them with fortitude, with tranquillity and with cheerfulness of heart. The tossing of a tempest does not discompose him, who is sure it will bring him to a joyful harbour.

A man who uses his best endeavours to live according to the dictates of virtue and right reason, has two perpetual sources of cheerfulness, in the consideration of his own nature, and of that being on whom he has a dependence. If he looks into himself, he cannot but rejoice in that existence, which was so lately bestowed upon him, and which after millions of ages will be still new, and still in its beginning. How may self-congratulation naturally arise in the mind, when it reflects on this its entrance into eternity: when it takes a view of those improvable faculties, which in a few years, and even at its first setting out, have made so considerable a progress, and which will be still receiving an increase of perfection, and consequently an increase of

happiness! The consciousness of such a being causes a perpetual diffusion of joy through the soul of a virtuous man; and makes him feel as much happiness as he is capable of conceiving.

The second source of cheerfulness to a good mind, is, its consideration of that being on whom we have our dependence, and in whom, though we behold him as yet but in the first faint discoveries of his perfections, we see every thing that we can imagine as great, glorious, or amiable. We find ourselves every where upheld by his goodness, and surrounded with an immensity of love and mercy. In short, we depend upon a Being, whose power qualifies him to make us happy by an infinity of means; whose goodness and truth engage him to make those happy who desire it of him; and whose unchangeableness will secure for us this happiness to all eternity.

Such considerations, which every one should perpetually cherish in his thoughts, will banish from us all that secret heaviness of heart, which unthinking men are subject to, when they lie

under no real affliction; all that anguish which we may feel from any evil that actually oppresses us; to which I may likewise add, those little cracklings of mirth and folly, that are apter to betray virtue than support it: and establish in us, such an even and cheerful temper, as will make us pleasing to ourselves, to those with whom we converse, and to him whom we are made to please.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD MAN COMPARED IN THE SEASON OF ADVERSITY.

RELIGION prepares the mind for encountering, with fortitude, the most severe shocks of adversity, whereas vice, by its natural influence on the temper, tends to produce dejection under the slightest trials. While worldly men enlarge their possessions, and extend their connexions, they imagine they are strengthening themselves against all the possible vicissitudes of life. They say in their hearts, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved." But so fatal is their delusion, that, instead of strengthening, they are weakening

that which alone can support them, when these vicissitudes come. It is their mind which must then support them; and their mind by their sensual attachments, is corrupted and enfeebled. Addicted with intemperate fondness to the pleasures of the world, they incur two great and certain evils: they both exclude themselves from every resource except the world; and they increase their sensibility to every blow, which comes upon them from that quarter.

They have neither principles nor temper which can stand the assault of trouble. They have no principles which lead them to look beyond the ordinary rotation of events; and therefore, when misfortunes involve them, the prospect must be comfortless on every side. Their crimes have disqualified them from looking up to the assistance of any higher power than their own ability, or for relying on any better guide than their own wisdom. And as from principle they can derive no support, so in a temper corrupted by prosperity, they find no relief. They have lost that moderation of mind which enables a wise man to

accommodate himself to his situation. Long fed with false hopes, they are exasperated and stung by every disappointment. Luxurious and effeminate, they can bear no uneasiness. Proud and presumptuous, they can brook no opposition. By nourishing dispositions, which so little suit this uncertain state, they have infused a double portion of bitterness into the cup of wo: they have sharpened the edge of that sword which is lifted up to smite them. Strangers to all the temperate satisfactions of good and pure minds; strangers to every pleasure but what was seasoned by vice or vanity, their adversity is to the last degree disconsolate. Health and opulence were the two pillars on which they rested. Shake either of them, and their whole edifice of hope and comfort falls. Such are the causes to which we must ascribe the broken spirits, the peevish temper, and the impatient passions that so often attend the declining age, or falling fortunes of vicious men.

But how different is the condition of a truly good man in those trying situations of life! Religion had gradually prepared his mind for

all the events of this inconstant state. It had instructed him in the nature of true happiness. It had early weaned him from the undue love of the world, by discovering to him its vanity, and by setting higher prospects in his view. Afflictions do not attack him by surprise, and therefore, do not overwhelm him. He was equipped for the storm, as well as the calm, in the dubious navigation of life. Under those conditions, he knew himself to be brought hither; that he was not always to retain the enjoyment of what he loved: and therefore, he is not overcome by disappointment, when that which is mortal dies; when that which is mutable begins to change; and when that which he knew to be transient passes away.

All the principles which religion teaches, and all the habits which it forms, are favourable to strength of mind. It will be found, that whatever purifies, fortifies also the heart. In the course of living "righteously, soberly, and piously," a good man acquires a steady and well-governed spirit. Trained by Divine grace, to enjoy with moderation, the advantages of the world, neither lifted up by success, nor

enervated with sensuality, he meets the changes in his lot without unmanly dejection. He is inured to temperance and restraint. He has learned firmness and self-command. He is accustomed to look up to the Supreme Providence, which disposes of human affairs, not with reverence only, but with trust and hope.

The time of prosperity was to him not merely a season of barren joy, but productive of much useful improvement. He had cultivated his mind. He had stored it with useful knowledge, with good principles, and virtuous dispositions. These resources remain entire, when the days of trouble come. They remain with him in sickness as in health; in poverty, as in the midst of riches; in his dark and solitary hours, no less than when surrounded with friends and gay society. From the glare of prosperity, he can, without dejection, withdraw into the shade. Excluded from several advantages of the world, he may be obliged to retreat into a narrower circle; but within that circle, he will find many comforts left. His chief pleasure was always of the calm, innocent, and temperate kind; and

over these, the changes of the world have the least power. His mind is a kingdom to him; and he can still enjoy it. The world did not bestow upon him all his enjoyments; and therefore, it is not in the power of the world, by its most cruel attacks, to carry them all away.

CHRISTIANITY FURNISHES THE BEST CONSOLATION UNDER THE EVILS OF LIFE.

It is of great importance to contemplate the Christian religion in the light of consolation; as bringing aid and relief to us amidst the distresses of life. Here our religion incontestably triumphs; and its happy effects, in this respect, furnish a strong argument to every benevolent mind, for wishing them to be farther diffused throughout the world. Every man must be conscious that his being is frail and feeble; he sees himself beset with various dangers; and is exposed to many a melancholy apprehension, from the evils which he may have to encounter, before he arrives at

the close of life. In this distressed condition, to reveal to him such discoveries of the Supreme Being as the Christian religion affords, is to reveal to him a father and a friend; is to let in a ray of the most cheering light upon the darkness of the human state. He who was before a destitute orphan, wandering in the inhospitable desert, has now gained a shelter from the bitter and inclement blast. He now knows to whom to pray, and in whom to trust; where to unbosom his sorrows; and to what hand to look for relief.

It is certain, when the heart bleeds from some wound of recent misfortune, nothing is of equal effect with religious comfort. It is of power to enlighten the darkest hour, and to assuage the severest wo, by the belief of Divine favour, and the prospect of a blessed immortality. In such hopes, the mind expatiates with joy; and when bereaved of its earthly friends, solaces itself with the thoughts of one Friend, who will never forsake it. Refined reasonings concerning the nature of the human condition, and the improvement which philosophy teaches us to make of every event,

may entertain the mind when it is at ease; may perhaps contribute to sooth it when slightly touched with sorrow; but when it is torn with any sore distress, they are cold and feeble, compared with a direct promise from the Father of mercies. This is, "an anchor to the soul both sure and stedfast." This has given consolation and refuge to many a virtuous heart, at a time when the most cogent reasonings would have proved utterly unavailing.

Upon the approach of death, when, if a man thinks at all, his anxiety about his future interests must naturally increase, the power of religious consolation is sensibly felt. Then appears, in the most striking light, the high value of the discoveries made by the gospel; not only life and immortality revealed, but a Mediator with God discovered; mercy proclaimed, through him, to the frailties of the penitent and the humble; and his presence promised to be with them when they are passing through "the valley of the shadow of death," in order to bring them safe into unseen habitations of rest and joy. Here is ground

for their leaving the world with comfort and peace. But in this severe and trying period, this labouring hour of nature, how shall the unhappy man support himself, who knows not, or believes not, the discoveries of religion? Secretly conscious to himself that he has not acted his part as he ought to have done, the sins of his past life arise before him in sad remembrance. He wishes to exist after death, yet he dreads that existence. The Governor of the world is unknown. He cannot tell whether every endeavour to obtain his mercy may not be in vain. All is awful obscurity around him; and, in the midst of endless doubts and perplexities, the trembling reluctant soul, is forced away from the body. As the misfortunes of his life must, to such a man, have been most oppressive, so its end is bitter. His sun sets in a dark cloud; and the night of death closes over his head, full of misery.

BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM SCENES OF DISTRESS.

Some periods of sadness have in our present situation, a just and natural place; and they are requisite to the true enjoyment of pleasure: but I shall at present decline considering the subject in this point of view; and confine myself to point out the direct effect of a proper attention to the distresses of life, upon our moral and religious character.

In the first place, the house of mourning is calculated to give a proper check to our natural thoughtlessness and levity. The indolence of mankind, and their love of pleasure, spread through all characters and ranks, some degree of aversion to what is grave and serious. They grasp at any object, either of business or amusement, which makes the present moment pass smoothly away; which carries their thoughts abroad, and saves them from the trouble of reflecting on themselves.

If some measures ought to be taken for rescuing the mind from this disgraceful levity: if some principals must be acquired, which may give more dignity and steadiness to conduct; where are these to be looked for? Not surely in the house of feasting, where every object flatters the senses, and strengthens the seductions to which we are already prone; where the spirit of dissipation circulates from heart to heart; and the children of folly mutually admire and are admired. It is in the sober and serious house of mourning, that the tide of vanity is made to turn; and a new direction given to the current of thought. When some affecting incident presents a strong discovery of the deceitfulness of wordly joy, and rouses our insensibility to human woe; when we behold those with whom we had lately mingled in the house of feasting, sunk by some of the sudden vicissitudes of life into the vale of misery; or when, in sad silence, we stand by the friend whom we had loved as our own soul, who is stretched on the bed of death; then is the season when the world begins to appear in a new light; when the heart opens to virtuous sentiments, and is led into

that train of reflection which ought to direct life. He who before knew not what it was to commune with his own heart on any serious subject, now puts the question to himself, for what purpose he was sent forth into this mortal transitory state; what his fate is likely to be when it concludes; and what judgement he ought to form of those pleasures which amuse for a little, but which, he now sees, cannot save the heart from anguish in the evil day. Touched by the hand of thoughtful melancholy, that airy edifice of bliss, which fancy had raised up for him, vanishes away. He beholds, in the place of it, the lonely and barren desert, in which, surrounded with many a disagreeable object, he is left musing upon himself. The time which he has mispent, and the faculties which he has misemployed, his foolish levity, and his criminal pursuits, all rise in painful prospect before him. That unknown state of existence into which, race after race, the children of men pass, strikes his mind with solemn awe. Is there no course by which he can retrieve his past errors? Is there no superior power to which he can look up for aid? Is there no plan of conduct

which if it exempt him not from sorrow, can at least procure him consolation amidst the distressful exigencies of life? Such meditations as these, suggested by the house of mourning, frequently produce a change in the whole character. They revive those sparks of goodness which were nearly extinguished, in the dissipated mind; and give rise to principles of conduct more rational in themselves and more suitable to the human state.

In the next place, impressions of this nature not only produce moral seriousness, but awaken sentiments of piety, and bring men into the sanctury of religion. One might indeed, imagine that the blessings of a prosperous condition would prove the most natural incitements to devotion; and that when men were happy in themselves, and saw nothing but happiness around them, they could not fail gratefully to acknowledge that God, who "giveth them all things richly to enjoy." Yet such is their corruption, that they are never more ready to forget their benefactor, than when loaded with his benefits. The giver is concealed from their careless and inattentive

view, by the cloud of his own gifts. When their life continues to flow in one smooth current, unruffled by any griefs; when they neither receive in their own circumstances, nor allow themselves to receive from the circumstances of others, any admonitions of human instability, they not only become regardless of Providence, but are in hazard of contemning it. Glorying in their strength, and lifted up by the pride of life into supposed independence, that impious sentiment, if not uttered by the mouth, yet too often lurks in the heart of many during their flourishing periods. "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"

If such be the tendency of the house of feasting, how necessary is it, that by some change in their situation, men should be obliged to enter into the house of mourning, in order to recover a proper sense of their dependent state! It is there, when forsaken by the gaieties of the world, and left alone with the Almighty, that we are made to perceive how awful his government is; how

easily human greatness bends before him; and how quickly all our designs and measurres, at his interposal, vanish into nothing. There, when the countenance is sad, and the affections are softened by grief; when we sit apart, involved in serious thought, looking down as from some eminence on those dark clouds that hang over the life of man, the arrogance of prosperity is humbled, and the heart melts under the impressions of religion. Formerly we were taught, but now we see, we feel, how much we stand in need of an Almighty Protector, amidst the changes of this vain world. Our soul cleaves to him who "despises not, nor abhors the affliction of the afflicted." Prayer flows forth of its own accord from the relenting heart, that he may be our God, and the God of our friends in distress; that he may never forsake us while we are sojourning in this land of pilgrimage; may strengthen us under its calamities, and bring us hereafter to those habitations of rest, where we and they whom we love, may be delivered from the trials which all are now doomed to endure. The discoveries of his mercy, which he has made in the gospel of Christ, are

viewed with joy, as so many rays of light sent down from above, to dispel, in some degree, the surrounding gloom. A Mediator and Intercessor with the Sovereign of the universe, appear comfortable names; and the resurrection of the just becomes the powerful cordial of grief. In such moments as these, which we may justly call happy moments, the soul participates in all the pleasures of devotion. It feels the power of religion to support and relieve. It is softened, without being broken. It is full, and it pours itself forth; pours itself forth, if we may be allowed to use the expression, into the bosom of its merciful Creator.

Enough has been said to show, that, on various occasions "sorrow may be better than laughter." Wouldst thou acquire the habit of recollection, and fix the principles of thy conduct; wouldst thou be led up to thy Creator and Redeemer, and be formed to sentiments of piety and devotion; wouldst thou be acquainted with those mild and tender affections which delight the compassionate and humane; wouldst thou have the power

of sensual appetites tamed and corrected, and thy soul raised above the ignoble love of life, and fear of death? go my brother, go—not to scenes of pleasure and riot, not to the house of feasting and mirth,—but to the silent house of mourning; and adventure to dwell for a while, among objects that will soften thy heart. Contemplate the lifeless remains of what was once fair and flourishing. Bring home to thyself the vicissitudes of life. Recall the remembrance of the friend, the parent, or the child, whom thou tenderly lovedst. Look back on the days of former years; and think on the companions of thy youth, who now sleep in the dust. Let the vanity, the mutability, and the sorrows of the human state, rise in full prospect before thee; and though thy "countenance may be made sad, thy heart shall be made better." This sadness, though for the present it dejects, yet shall in the end fortify thy spirit; inspiring thee with such sentiments; and prompting such resolutions as shall enable thee to enjoy, with more real advantage, the rest of life. Dispositions of this nature form one part of the character of those mourners whom our

Saviour hath pronounced blessed; and of those to whom it is promised, that "sowing in tears they shall reap in joy." A great difference there is between being serious and melancholy; and a melancholy too there is of that kind which deserves to be sometimes indulged.

Religion hath, on the whole, provided for every good man abundant materials of consolation and relief. How dark soever the present face of nature may appear, it dispels the darkness, when it brings into view, the entire system of things, and extends our survey to the whole kingdom of God. It represents what we now behold as only apart, and a small part, of the general order. It assures us, that though here, for wise ends, misery and sorrow are permitted to have place, these temporary evils shall, in the end, advance the happiness of all who love God, and are faithful to their duty. It shows them this mixed and confused scene vanishing by degrees away, and preparing the introduction of that state, where the house of mourning shall be shut up for ever; where no tears are seen, and no groans *heard;* where no hopes are frustrated, and

no virtuous connexions dissolved; but where, under the light of the Divine countenance, goodness shall flourish in perpetual felicity. Thus, though religion may occasionally chasten our mirth with sadness of countenance; yet under that sadness it allows not the hearts of good men to sink. It calls upon them to rejoice "because the Lord reigneth, who is their Rock, and the most high God, who is their Redeemer."

A TEMPERATE PURSUIT OF GAIN RECOMMENDED.

THE world is abused, not only by persons who intemperately pursue its pleasures, but by those who have a sordid attachment to its gains. The latter respect a set of men of very different description from the former; more decent in their carriage, and less flagrant in their vices: but corrupted by the world in no less a degree. For the world is often abused by the men of business, as much as by the men of pleasure. When wordly success becomes the sole object of their life; when the accumulation of fortune so engrosses

them as to harden their heart against every feeling of moral obligation: when it renders them insensible to the calls of affection, and to the impressions of piety and religion, they then come under the class of the covetous, whom, it is said, "the Lord abhorreth."

A good man may seek, by fair industry, to render his circumstances easy and plentiful. He may bestow a considerable portion of his time and attention on the successful management of his wordly interests. All this is within the limits of that allowable use of the world, to which religion gives its sanction. But to a wise and good man, the world is only a secondary object. He remembers there is an eternity beyond it. His care is, not merely to amass and possess, but to use its possessions well, as one who is an accountable being. He is not a slave either to the hopes or the fears of the world. He would rather forfeit any present advantage, than obtain it at the expence of violating the divine law, or neglecting his duty. This is using the world like a good man. This is living in it as a subject of the Almighty, and a member of the great community of mankind. To such

a man, riches are a blessing. He may enjoy them; but he will use them with liberality. They open a wide field to the exercise of his virtue, and allow it to shine with diffusive lustre.

Very opposite to this is the character of the worldly-minded. To them, the mere attainment of earthly possessions is an ultimate aim. They cannot be said to "use the world;" for to possess, not to use or enjoy, is their object. They are emphatically said in Scripture, to "load themselves with thick clay." Some sort of apology may be framed for them who seek to extract from the world, pleasure of one kind or other. But for those, who know no pleasure, farther than "adding house to house, and field to field," and calling them their own, it is hardly possible to frame any apology. Such persons are idolaters of the worst kind; for they have made the world their god. They daily worship and bow down before it; and hold nothing to be mean or base which can promote the enlargement of their fortune. He is an abuser of the world, let his possessions be ever so ample, who knows nothing higher than the gains of the

world. He is an abuser of the world, who sacrifices probity, virtue, or humanity, to its interests. He is an abuser of the world, who cannot occasionally retreat from it, to consider what character he bears in the sight of his Creator; and to what issue his conduct will bring him at last. In a word, the world is then properly used, when it is generously and beneficently enjoyed—neither hoarded up by avarice, nor squandered by ostentation.

REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIVERSAL PRESENCE OF THE DEITY.

In one of my late papers, I had occasion to consider the ubiquity of the Godhead, and at the same time, to show, that as he is present to every thing, he cannot but be attentive to every thing, and privy to all the modes and parts of its existence; or, in other words, that His omniscience and His omnipresence are co-existent, and run together through the whole infinitude of space. This consideration might furnish us with many incentives to devotion, and motives to morality: but as this subject has been handled by several excellent

writers, I shall consider it in a light in which I have not seen it placed by others.

First, how disconsolate is the condition of an intellectual being, who is thus present with his Maker, but, at the same time, receives no extraordinary benefit or advantage from his presence!

Secondly, how deplorable is the condition of an intellectual being, who feels no other effects from His presence, than such as proceed from divine wrath and indignation!

Thirdly, how happy is the condition of the intellectual being, who is sensible of his Maker's presence, from the secret effects of his mercy and loving kindness.

First, how disconsolate is the condition of an intellectual being, who is thus present with his Maker, but at the same time receives no extraordinary benefit or advantage from his presence! Every particle of matter is actuated by this Almighty Being which passes through it. The heavens and the earth, the stars and planets, move and are regulated by

virtue of this great principal within them. All the dead parts of nature are invigorated by the presence of their Creator, and made capable of exerting their respective qualities. The several instincts, in the brute creation, do likewise operate and work toward the several ends which are agreeable to them, by this divine energy. Man only, who does not co-operate with his whole spirit, and is inattentive to his presence, receives none of those advantages from it, which are perfective of his nature, and necessary to his well being. The divinity is with him, and in him, and every where about him, but of no advantage to him. It is the same thing to the man without religion, as if there were no God in the world. It is indeed impossible for an infinite Being to remove himself from any of his creatures; but though he cannot withdraw his essence from us, which would argue an imperfection in Him, he can withdraw from us all the joys and consolations of it. His presence may, perhaps, be necessary to support us in our existence; but he may leave this our existence to itself, with regard to its *happiness* or misery. For, in this sense, he [redacted] us away from his presence, and

take his holy spirit from us. This single consideration one would think sufficient to make us open our hearts to all these infusions of joy and gladness, which are so near at hand, and ready to be poured in upon us; especially when we consider, secondly, the deplorable condition of an intellectual being, who feels no other effects from the Maker's presence, than such as proceed from divine wrath and indignation!

We may assure ourselves, that the Great Author of nature will not always be as one who is indifferent to any of his creatures. Those who will not feel him in his love, will be sure at length to feel him in his displeasure. And how dreadful is the condition of that creature who is sensible of the being of his Creator, only by what he suffers from him! He is as essentially present in hell as in heaven; but the inhabitants of those dismal regions behold Him only in his wrath, and shrink within the flames to conceal themselves from him. It is not in the power of imagination to conceive the fearful effects of Omnipotence incensed.

But I shall only consider the wretchedness of an intellectual being, that, in this life, lies under the displeasure of him, who, at all times, and in all places, is intimately united with him. He is able to disquiet the soul, and vex it in all its faculties; He can hinder any of the greatest comforts of life from refreshing us, and give an edge to every one of its slightest calamities. Who then can bear the thought of being an out-cast from his presence, that is, from the comforts of it, or of feeling it only in its terrors; How pathetic is that expostulation of Job, when for the real trial of his patience, he was made to look upon himself in this deplorable condition! "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am become a burden to myself?" But, thirdly, how happy is the condition of that intellectual being, who is sensible of his Maker's presence, from the secret effects of his mercy and loving kindness!

The blessed in heaven behold him face to face, that is, are as sensible of his presence as we are of the presence of any person whom we look upon with our eyes. There is doubtless *a faculty* in spirits, by which they apprehend

one another, as our senses do material objects; and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified bodies, will, by this faculty, in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the divine presence. We, who have this veil of flesh standing between us and the world of spirits, must be content to know that the spirit of God is present with us, by the effects which he produces in us. Our outward senses are too gross to apprehend Him. We may, however, taste and see how gracious he is, by his influence upon our minds; by those virtuous thoughts which he awakens in us; by those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls; and by those ravishing joys and inward satisfactions which are frequently springing up, and diffusing themselves among the thoughts of good men. He is lodged in our very essence and is as a soul within the soul, to enlighten its understanding rectify its will, purify its passions, and enliven all the powers of man. How happy therefore, is an intellectual being who, by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul!

Though the whole creation frowns, and all nature looks black about him, he has his light and support within, that are able to cheer his mind, and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors which encompass him. He knows that his helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing else can be, which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that Being who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, his glory, and the lifter-up of his head. In his deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest of beings; and perceives within himself such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful than any thing that can be met with in the conversation of his creatures. Even in the hour of death, he considers the pangs of his dissolution to be only the breaking down of that partition, which stands between his soul, and the sight of that Being, who is always present with him, and is about to manifest itself to him in fulness of joy.

If we would be thus happy, and thus sensible

of our Maker's presence, from the secret effects of his mercy and goodness, we must keep such a watch over all our thoughts, that in the language of the Scripture, his soul may have pleasure in us. We must take care not to grieve his holy Spirit, and endeavour to make the meditations of our hearts, always acceptable in his sight, that he may delight thus to reside and dwell in us. The light of nature could direct Seneca, to this doctrine, in a very remarkable passage of one of his epistles: "There is (says he) a holy spirit residing in us, who watches and observes good and evil men, and will treat us after the same manner that we treat him." But I shall conclude this discourse with those more emphatical words in Divine Revelation: "If a man love me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

YOUTH THE PROPER SEASON FOR GAINING KNOWLEDGE, AND FORMING RELIGIOUS HABITS.

THE duty which young people owe to their instructors, cannot be better shown, than in

the effect which the instructions they receive have upon them. They would do well, therefore, to consider the advantages of an early attention to these two things, both of great importance, knwledge and religion.

The great use of knowledge, in all its various branches, is to free the mind from the prejudices of ignorance; and to give it juster and more enlarged conceptions, than are the mere growth of rude nature. By reading we add the experience of others to our own. It is the experience of our mind chiefly, that makes the difference between man and man; and gives one man a real superiority over another.

Besides, the mind must be employed. A vacant mind is exactly that house mentioned in the Gospel, which the devil found empty. In he entered; and taking with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, they took possession. It is an undoubted truth that one vice ind lged, introduces others; and that each succeeding vice becomes more depraved. If then, the mind must be employed *what* can fill up its vacancies more rationally,

than the acquisition of knowledge? Let us, therefore, thank God, for the opportunities he has offered us; and not turn into a curse, those means of leisure, which might become so great a blessing.

But, however necessary to us knowledge may be, religion, we know, is infinitely more so. The one adorns a man and gives him, it is true, superiority and rank in life; but the other is absolutely essential to his happiness.

In the midst of youth, health and abundance, the world is apt to appear a very gay and pleasing scene; it engages our desires; and, in a degree satisfies them also. But it is wisdom to consider, that a time will come, when youth, health, and fortune, will fail us; and if disappointment and vexation do not sour our taste for pleasure, at least sickness and infirmities will destroy it. In these gloomy seasons, and, above all, at the approach of death, what will become of us without religion? When this world fails, where shall we fly, if we expect no refuge in another? Without holy hope in God, and resignation to his will, and trust in him for deliverance.

what is there that can secure us against the evils of life?

The great utility, therefore, of knowledge and religion being thus apparent, it is highly incumbent upon us to pay a studious attention to them in our youth. If we do not, it is more than probable, that we shall never do it: that we shall grow old in ignorance, by neglecting the other.

For improvement in knowledge, youth is certainly the fittest season. It is free from all the care and attention, which, in riper age, the affairs of life bring with them. The memory too is stronger, and better able to acquire the rudiments of knowledge; and as the mind is then void of ideas, it is more suited to those parts of learning which are conversant in words. Besides, there are sometimes in youth a modesty and ductility, which, in advanced years, if those years especially have been left a prey to ignorance, become self-sufficiency, and prejudice; and these effectually bar up all the inlets to knowledge. But, above all, unless habits of attention and application are early gained, we shall

rarely acquire them afterwards. The inconsiderate youth, seldom reflects upon this; nor knows his loss, till he knows also that it cannot be retrieved.

Nor is youth more the season to acquire knowledge, than to form religious habits. It is a great point to get habit on the side of virtue; it will make every thing smooth and easy. The earliest principles are generally the most lasting; and those of a religious cast are seldom wholly lost. Though the temptations of the world may, now and then, draw the well-principled youth aside, yet his principles being continually at war with his practice, there is hope, that in the end, the better part may overcome the worse, and bring on a reformation; whereas he, who has suffered habits of vice to get possession of his youth, has little chance of being brought back to a sense of religion. In the common course of things, it can rarely happen. Some calamity must rouse him. He must be awakened by a storm, or sleep for ever. How much better is it then, to make that easy to us, which we

know is best? And to form those habits which hereafter we shall wish we had fo

To conclude, our youth bears the proportion to our more advanced life, world does to the next. In this life, we form and cultivate those habits of virtue, will qualify us for a better state. If we n them here, and contract habits of an op kind, instead of gaining that exalted which is promised to our improvemer shall of course sink into that state, wh adapted to the habits we have formed.

Exactly thus, is youth introductory to hood, to which it is, properly speaking, of preparation. During this season, we qualify ourselves for the parts we are hereafter. In manhood we bear the which has in youth been planted. If w sauntered away our youth, we must to be ignorant men. If indolence and in tion have taken an early possession of us will probably increase as they advance i and make us a burden to ourselves useless to society. If again, we suffe *selves to* be misled by vicious inclina

they will daily gain new strength, and end in dissolute lives. But if we cultivate our minds in youth, attain habits of attention and industry, of virtue and sobriety, we shall find ourselves well prepared to act our future parts in life; and what above all things ought to be our care, by gaining this command over ourselves, we shall be more able, as we go forward in the world, to resist every new temptation, as soon as it appears.

THE NATURE OF TRUE DEVOTION.

DEVOTION is the lively excercise of those affections, which we owe to the Supreme Being. It comprehends several emotions of the heart, which all terminate in the same great object. The chief of them are, veneration, gratitude, desire and resignation.

It implies first profound veneration of God. By veneration, I understand, an affection compounded of awe and love; the affection which, of all others, it best becomes creatures to bear towards their infinitely perfect Creator. Awe is the first sentiment that arises in the soul, at the view of his greatness. But in the

heart of a devout man, it is a solemn and elevating, not a dejecting emotion, for he glows rather than trembles, in the Divine presence. It is not the superstitious dread of unknown power, but the homage yielded by the heart to Him, who is, at once, the greatest and the best of Beings. Omnipotence viewed alone, would be a formidable object. But considered in conjunction with the moral perfections of the Divine nature, it serves to heighten devotion. Goodness affects the heart with double energy, when residing in one so exalted. The goodness which we adore in Him, is not like that which is common among men, a weak, mutable, undiscerning fondness, ill qualified to be the ground of assured trust. It is the goodness of a perfect Governor, acting upon a regular extensive plan; a steady principle of benevolence, conducted by wisdom; which, subject to no "variableness or shadow of turning," free from all partiality and caprice, incapable of being either soothed by flattery, or ruffled by resentment, resembles, in its calm and equal lustre, the eternal serenity of the highest heavens.

[redacted] are the conceptions of the Great God,

which fill with veneration the heart of a devout man. His veneration is not confined to acts of immediate worship. It is the habitual temper of his soul. Not only when engaged in prayer or praise, but in the silence of retirement, and even amidst the occupations of the world, the Divine Being dwells upon his thoughts. No place or object appears to him void of God. On the works of nature, he views the impression of his hand; and in the actions of men he traces the operations of his Providence. Whatever he beholds on earth, that is beautiful or fair, that is great or good, he refers to God, as the supreme origin of all the excellence which is scattered throughout his works. From those effects, he rises to the first cause. From those streams, he ascends to the fountain whence they flow. By those rays, he is led to that eternal source of light in which they center.

Devotion implies, secondly, sincere gratitude to God, for all his benefits. This is a warmer emotion than simple veneration. Veneration looks up to the Deity, as he is in himself; gratitude regards what he is towards us.

When a devout man surveys this vast universe, where beauty and goodness are every where predominant; when he reflects on those numberless multitudes of creatures, who, in their different stations, enjoy the blessings of existence; and when at the same time, he looks up to a Universal Father, who had thus filled creation with life and happiness, his heart glows within him. He adores that disinterested goodness, which prompted the Almighty to raise up so many orders of intelligent beings, not that he might receive, but that he might give and and impart; that he might pour forth himself, and communicate to the spirits which he formed, some emanations of his felicity.

The goodness of this Supreme Benefactor he gratefully contemplates, as displayed in his own state. He reviews the events of his life; and in every comfort which has sweetened it, he discerns the Divine hand. Does he remember with affection the parents under whose care he grew up, and the companions with whom he passed his youthful life? Is he now happy, in his family rising around him, in the spouse who loves him, or in the children who

give him comfort and joy? Into every tender remembrance of the past, and every pleasing enjoyment of the present, devotion enters; for in all those beloved objects, it, recognises God. The communication of love from heart to heart, is an effusion of his goodness. From his inspiration, descends all the friendship which ever glowed on earth; and therefore to him it justly returns in gratitude, and terminates in him.

But this life, with all its interests, is but a small part of human existence. A devout man looks forward to immortality, and discovers still higher subjects of gratitude. He views himself, as a guilty creature, whom Divine benignity has received into grace; whose fortified hopes it has restored; and to whom it has opened the most glorious prospect of future felicity. Such generosity shown to the fallen and miserable, is yet more affecting to the heart, than favours conferred on the innocent. He contemplates, with astonishment, the labours of the Son of God, in accomplishing redemption for men; and his soul overflowes with thankfulness to Him, "who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. What shall

I render to the Lord for all his benefits? Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness, and with tender mercies."

Devotion implies, thirdly, the desire of the soul after the favour of the Supreme Being, as its chief good and final rest. To inferior enjoyments, the devout man allots inferior and secondary attachment. He claims not every earthly affection. He pretends not to renounce all pleasure in the comforts of his present state. Such an unnatural renunciation humanity forbids, and religion cannot require. But from these he expects not his supreme bliss. He discerns the vanity which belongs to them all; and beyond the circle of mutable objects which surround him, he aspires after some principals of more perfect felicity, which shall not be subject to change or decay. But where is this complete and perfect good to be found? Ambition pursues it in courts and palaces; and returns from the pursuit, loaded with sorrows.

Pleasure seeks it among sensual joys; and retires with the confession of disappointment. True happiness dwells with God, and from "the light of his countenance," it beams upon the devout man. His voice is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." After exploring heaven and earth for happiness, they seem to him a mighty void, a wilderness of shadows where all would be empty and unsubstantial without God. But in his favour and love, he finds what supplies every defect of temporal objects; and assures tranquillity to his heart, amidst all the changes of his existence.

From these sentiments and affections devotion advances, fourthly, to an entire resignation of the soul to God. It is the consummation of truth and hope. It banishes anxious cares, and murmuring thoughts. It reconciles us to the desire of pleasing Him, whom our hearts adore. Its genuine breathings are to this effect; "Conduct me, O God! in what path soever seemeth good to thee. In nothing shall I ever arraign thy sacred will. Dost Thou require me to part with any worldly advantages, for the sake of virtue and a good

conscience? I give them up. Dost
command me to relinquish my friends,
country? At thy call I cheerfully leav
Dost thou summon me away from this
Lo! I am ready to depart. Thou hast
Thou hast redeemed me, and I am
Myself and all that belongs to me, I su
to thy disposal.

Such, in general, are the dispositio
constitute devotion. It is the union o
ration, gratitude, desire, and resignati
expresses, not so much the performa
any particular duty, as the spirit whic
animate all religious duties. It stands o
not merely to downright vice; but to
which is cold, and insensible to sacred
which, from compulsion perhaps, and
of interest, preserves some regard
Divine commands, but obeys them
ardour, love, or joy.

VIRTUE MAN'S HIGHEST INTE

I FIND myself existing upon a litt
surrounded every way by an immense w

expansion.—What sort of place, then, do I inhabit? Is it exactly accommodated in every instance to my convenience? Is there no excess of cold, none of heat to offend me? Is every thing subservient to me, as though I had ordered all myself? No—nothing like it—the farthest from it possible. The world appears not, then, originally made for the private convenience of me alone?—It does not. What consequence then follows; or can there be any other than this—If I seek an interest of my own detached from that of others, I seek an interest which is chimerical, and which can never have existence.

How then must I determine? Have I no interest at all? If I have not, I am stationed here to no purpose. But why no interest? Can I be contented with none but one seperate and detached? Is a social interest, joined with others, such an absurdity as not to be admitted? The bee and the beaver, are sufficient to convince me, that the thing is somewhere at least possible. How, then, am I assured that it is not equally true of man? Admit it, and what follows? That honour and justice are my interest; without some portion

of which, not even the worst can maintain society.

But, farther still—I stop not here—I pass from my own stock, my own neighbourhood, my own nation, to the whole race of mankind.—Am I not related to them all, by the mutual aids of commerce, by the general intercourse of arts and letters, by that common nature of which we all participate?

Again—I must have food and clothing.—Without a genial warmth, I instantly perish. Am I not related, in this view, to the very earth itself? to the distant sun, from whose beams I derive vigour? to that stupendous order of the infinite host of heaven, by which the times and seasons ever uniformly pass on? Were this order once confounded, I could not probably survive a moment; so absolutely do I depend on this common general welfare. What, then, have I to do, but to enlarge virtue into piety! Not only honour and justice, and what I owe to man, are my interest; but gratitude also, acquiescence, resignation, adoration, are due *to its great* Governor, our common Parent.